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35 YEARS OF STREET FIGHTER
HOW CAPCOM'S BRAWLER BECAME A WORLD-BEATING CULTURAL PHENOMENON

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THE RETROBATES

WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE STREET FIGHTER CHARACTER?

DARRAN JONES

It's Hugo, after I fell in love with him while playing *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*.
Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine, all under one roof!
Currently playing: *Trauma Center: Second Opinion*
Favourite game of all time: *Strider*

TIM EMPEY

I always enjoyed destroying Darran with Alex (and with Yun too) back in the day. Even better was their unique pre-match stare-down.
Expertise: Finishing Game Pass games before they go
Currently playing: *Cyberpunk 2077*
Favourite game of all time: *God Hand*

NICK THORPE

If I'm feeling spicy and want a change from Ryu, I like to run far away from my comfort zone by playing as Sakura.
Expertise: Owning five Master Systems and a Mark III
Currently playing: *Duolingo*
Favourite game of all time: *Sonic The Hedgehog*

ANDY SALTER

I don't really have a favourite character, but the first character I played as was Blanka, probably because he looked the strangest.
Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!
Currently playing: *Total War: Rome Remastered…* Modded of course
Favourite game of all time: *Rome: Total War*

PAUL DRURY

Chun-Li, especially after mastering the art of pulling off her Spinning Bird Kick, a move so good the Arctic Monkeys wrote a song about it.
Expertise: Secret warps in *Crystal Castles*
Currently playing: *Pocky & Rocky Reshrined*
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*

PAUL ROSE

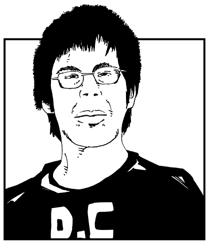
My favourite character is – boringly – Ken, because I can only do the special moves for him and Ryu, but I like Ken's hair more.
Expertise: Winging it
Currently playing *Civilisation VI* (again).
Favourite game of all time: *Half-Life 2*

ANDREW FISHER

M Bison/Vega from *Street Fighter II*, after years of perfecting his Psycho Crusher.
Expertise: Forty years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Switch.
Currently playing: *Katamari Damacy REROLL*
Favourite game of all time: *Wizball*

RORY MILNE

I always play as Ryu, just because of his Hadoken. If there's a more satisfying range attack to pull-off in the heat of battle then I'd like to see it.
Expertise: The game that I'm writing about at the time of writing
Currently playing: *Donkey Kong Country*
Favourite game of all time: *Tempest*



DAVID CROOKES

I'm going to say Oro the immortal hermit. Anyone who goes into a fight with one arm tied has got to earn respect.
Expertise: Amstrad, Lynx, adventures, Dizzy and PlayStation 2 (but is it actually retro? Debate!)
Currently playing: *Glider*
Favourite game of all time: *Broken Sword*

LOADING...

Few games have seeped into popular culture like Capcom's *Street Fighter*, from appearances on multiplex screens, to mentions in everything from *Family Guy* to *The Simpsons*. While it didn't have the most auspicious of beginnings, its sequel tore up the fighting game rulebook and set standards for years to come.

We've been lucky then to not only quiz Capcom developers, but also speak to the people whose lives have been touched by the iconic series, from other developers to blog writers and tournament players. The reach of Capcom's series outdoes even Dhalsim's and its impact on the genre and gaming in general hits harder than any of Ryu's fireballs. It's quite simply in a class of its own and the incoming release of *Street Fighter 6* shows that interest in the series shows no signs of diminishing.

Outside of our excellent cover story, we also go behind the scenes of *Agony* and *Nocturne*, revisit *Super Space Invaders* and *Elite*, and discover how the BBC Micro-focussed publisher Software Invasion was set up. We also reveal 40 of the budget games that defined Codemasters and reveal why *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile* is a hidden gem. Oh and don't forget our subs offer on page 28.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.

retro GAMER
35 YEARS OF STREET FIGHTER

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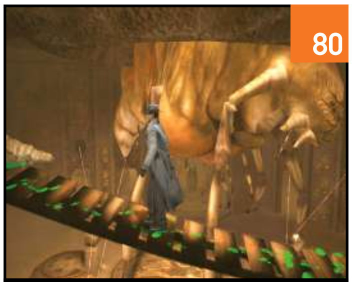
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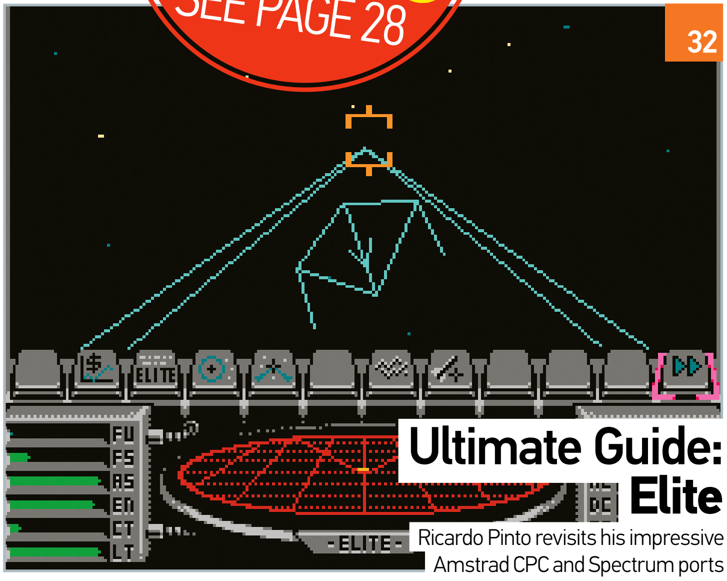

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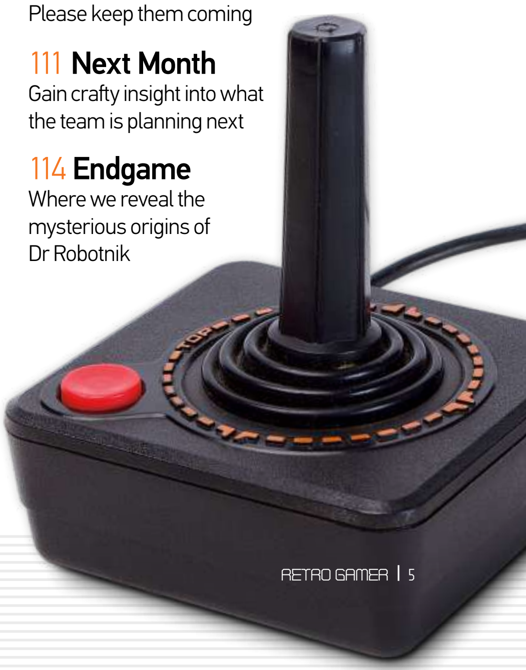

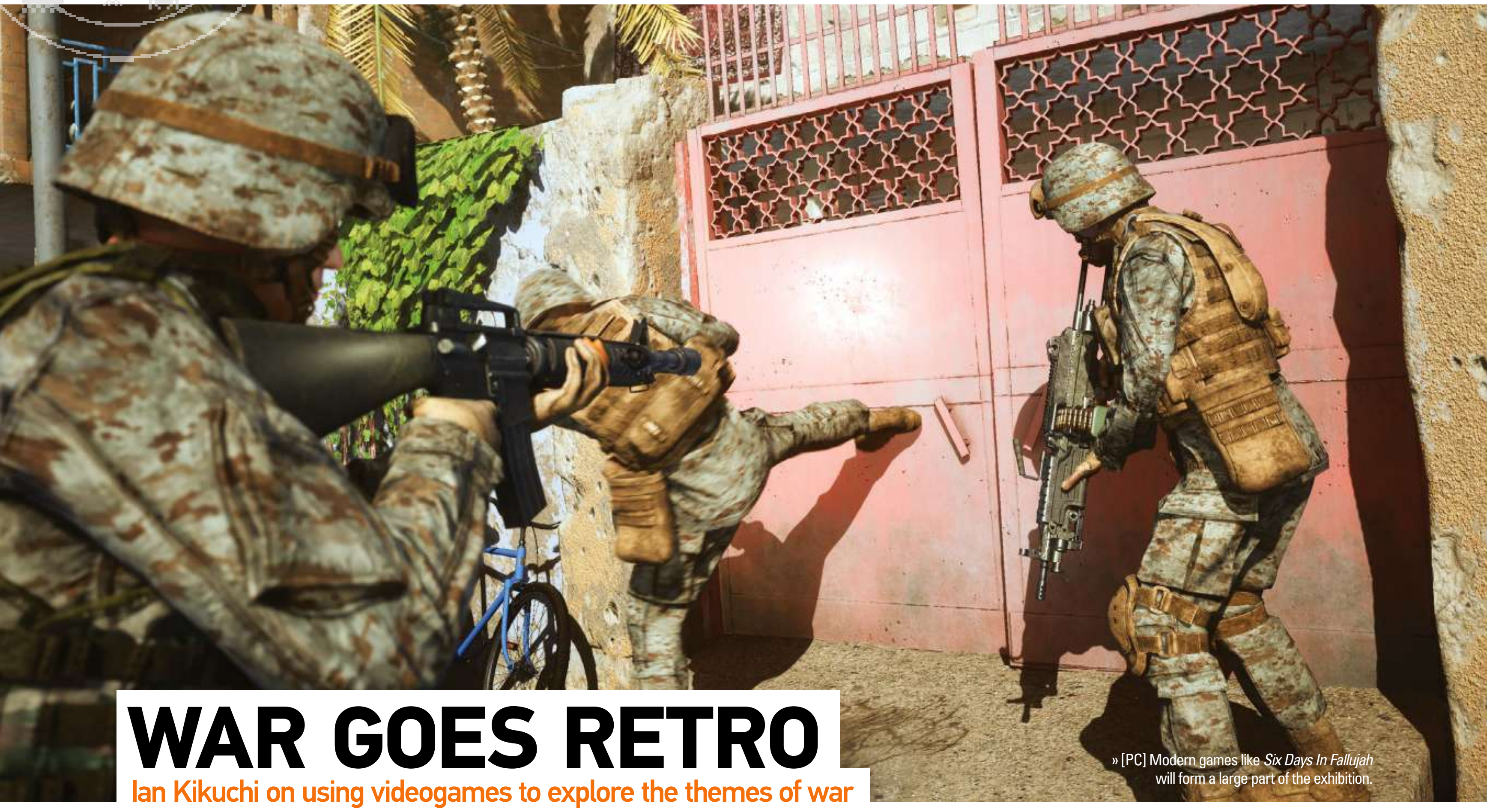

» [PC] Modern games like *Six Days In Fallujah* will form a large part of the exhibition.

WAR GOES RETRO

Ian Kikuchi on using videogames to explore the themes of war

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Nick travels back to November 2005 where he discovers the beginnings of high-definition gaming

War and conflict have been themes for videogames since practically the birth of the medium itself. From early titles like *Tank* and *Space Invaders* to modern releases like *Call Of Duty* and *Splatoon*, gamers love to attack each other, whether it's with digital replicas of real-life weaponry, or fantastical armaments. One person who is well aware of this fascination is Ian Kikuchi the senior curator (historian) of Second World War and mid 20th century at Imperial War Museums and the curator of a new exhibition called War Games: Real Conflicts | Virtual Worlds | Extreme Entertainment.

"The idea to do an exhibition about war and videogames came to me while working on an earlier IWM exhibition about movies and war cinema, back in 2016," Ian says. "Just like films, games are a powerful way of telling war stories. Because games are so emotionally engaging, they can also be a powerful way to get people to think about other people's experiences. Games like *Bury Me, My Love* or *This War Of Mine*, which feature in the War Games exhibition, can put us in the shoes of people confronted by the terrible consequences of war."

» [Atari 2600] War and conflict have been aspects of gaming since the Seventies and Eighties.

While videogames are often criticised for their portrayal of war, Ian feels that some games do manage to strike the correct tone. "One game that had a real impact on me was Sensible Software's *Cannon Fodder*," he continues, revealing that the Sensible Software game is one of 13 retro games featured in the exhibition. "By using permadeath for the player's troops, and by constantly reminding you of how many troops you'd lost as the game progressed, *Cannon Fodder* made the deaths of its little pixelated soldiers moving and meaningful. It was controversial when it came out, but a hugely effective satire on war."

> "Cannon Fodder made the deaths of its little pixelated soldiers moving"
>
> **IAN KIKUCHI**

Ian does point out that videogames aren't always accurate however, with "boredom" being one of the things they can often get wrong. "There's an old saying that war is months of boredom punctuated with moments of sheer terror. That formula, however, doesn't really make for a compelling videogame," he explains. "I think also games tend to give a narrow view of what war is. Often a war game's perspective will be that of a soldier fighting in the frontline, or a commander with a bird's-eye view of the battlefield. But war, and the World Wars in particular, isn't only experienced by troops in the frontline – wars affect entire societies."

Ian hopes War Games will give the general public a better

Ian Kikuchi is the curator behind Imperial War Museums' new War Games exhibition.

understanding of how videogames represent war and that it's not just for cheap thrills. To do this he has amassed a large number of games, from modern titles to retro classics. "When I first pitched the exhibition, I wanted to go right back to the beginnings of computer games," he says, citing the likes of *Tennis For Two* and *Space War*. "As the exhibition evolved after testing with some of our visitors, we began to focus in on war games, ensuring we still had a spread of games from the Eighties to the present day."

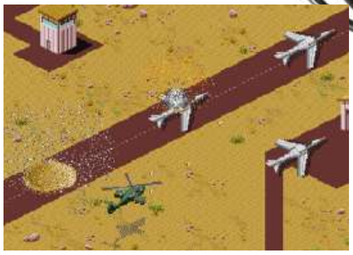
With the war still ongoing in Ukraine, we asked Ian if there were concerns that the team should still go ahead with the exhibition. "I proposed this exhibition back in 2017, long before the outbreak of the current war in Ukraine," he says. "IWM seeks to explore all aspects of war and conflict, and that includes the way conflict manifests in popular culture; we've previously done exhibitions on music and on war films. IWM is committed to presenting a balanced and empathetic perspective, and while this exhibition is about videogames, we would never trivialise stories of real war. We're confident the exhibition does not do so. We hope that visitors will come away with a richer understanding for how videogames, like other cultural media, can be used to interpret conflicts past and present as well as reveal the human stories inherent to people's lived experience of war."

And it's those very real human stories that take place against the backdrop of war that Ian really hopes people will take away with them after visiting War Games when it opens this September. "I hope War Games will give visitors new appreciation for the ways that games can tell stories about wars both real and imagined, and encourage them to think about the ways that war gets represented in the games they play," he tells us. "For those visitors who don't currently play videogames, I really hope it will give them an impression of the huge variety of different games that are out there; from roller-coaster first-person shooters and cautious, thinking military sims, through to thought-provoking empathy games and beautiful narrative experiences." *

» [SNES] Ian greatly enjoyed *Cannon Fodder* on the SNES and it will be part of the War Games exhibition.

» [PlayStation] Ian revealed that many of the featured retro games run on PlayStations.

» [PlayStation] Strategy games such as *Hogs Of War* will also feature in the exhibition.



» [Mega Drive] *Desert Strike* was a huge deal on release so it makes sense it's included in War Games' Retro Zone.

War Games: Real Conflicts | Virtual Worlds | Extreme Entertainment runs at IWM London from 30 September – 28 May 2023. The accompanying Retro Zone is open until 2 January 2023.

» Items like this Xbox 360 controller, which was used to operate the camera of an unmanned aerial vehicle in Iraq and Afghanistan, will also be on display.

C64 GAMES HEAD TO EVERCADE

We did reveal they were on the way in our previous issue, but Blaze Entertainment has now announced that C64 games will be added to its range of Evercade carts courtesy of Retro Games Ltd. There will be 14 games on *The C64 Collection 1* and the selection will include *Winter Games*, *Alleykat*, *Stormlord* and *Impossible Mission*. Granted, many of them are available on The C64, but it's still nice to see. Here's hoping Amiga titles get announced for 2023.

EVERCADE
THE C64
COLLECTION 1
14

KIRBY DOES FALL GUYS

In addition to announcing that the long-delayed *Bayonetta 3* was finally heading to Switch, Nintendo also revealed a brand-new *Kirby* game. Titled *Kirby's Dream Buffet* it appears to be a multiplayer-focused game in the vein of *Fall Guys* with Kirby and his competitors navigating colourful obstacle courses while gathering up strawberries. It's due out in the summer so look out for it on the Switch eShop.

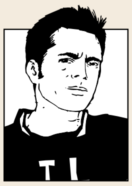
retroradar COLUMN

FEATURING IAIN LEE

Who is Iain Lee?

Iain Lee is a freelance broadcaster who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. Join him as he hosts a phone-in show and plays games at www.twitch.tv/iainlee and also check out www.patreon.com/iainandKatherine

Sunday, flippin' Sunday



I am old enough to remember when Sunday was so boring it physically hurt. Actual pain caused by boredom. Growing up in the Seventies may look glamorous on those retro TV shows but honestly the Seventies sucked. Sundays were the worst. EVERYTHING was shut. This is not an exaggeration. Literally everything, churches to one side, was closed. If you needed bread or milk, tough. Should have got it Saturday. Even the petrol stations were shut. And to make matters worse, TV was awful as well. *Antiques Roadshow*, *Songs Of Praise* and *Bullseye*. Shoot me now.

This Sunday malaise was lifted significantly when we got our first computer, the much-maligned and underrated Dragon 32. Kids around the country breathed a sigh of relief when computers became more common. At last – there was something to do!

Our Dragon was kept in its original, huge box, cardboard slipcover and massive polystyrene case. It lived at the back of mum and dad's wardrobe. Getting it set up to play was a mammoth task. First, permission had to be granted. "Mum, can I play on the computer?" was generally met with a yes but there were also random no's and I can't think why. The concept of screen time was yet to emerge, in fact in those days television was the babysitter. Literally. There were times from 6pm onwards where I was left at home alone and told to stay in front of the telly. (Note to editor – if my mum can still go to prison for this, 42 years later, please delete).

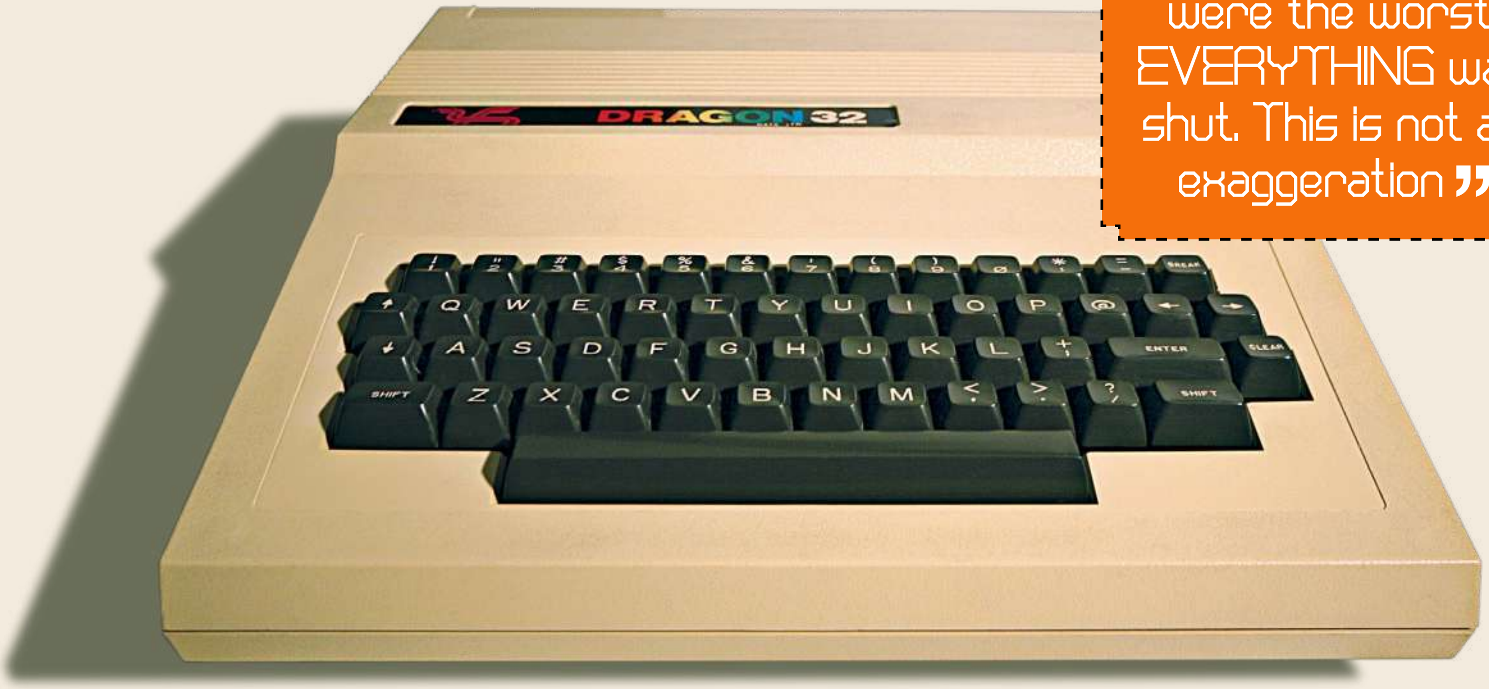
Once permission had been granted, the physical work began. We had a small white table that had to be put in place next to mum and dad's bed. Then the black-and-white portable had to be pilfered from my sister's room. Finally, the Dragon itself was laid on the floor, cables all neatly sorted and portable cassette player ready to go. This whole process could take an hour.

The joy of being able to do something, to take off on flights of fancy, was so important. Playing games back then was certainly more intense for me than they are now. While the graphics of those old machines seem little better than caveman drawings, we couldn't see that. All I had in my head was an animated version of the incredibly misleading cover art. What was happening on the screen was REAL and as immersive to nine-year-old me as VR is now.

Of course, it had to come to an end. Around 5pm I would be told to pack it away. I could sometimes stretch this out for another hour but by 6pm it was my weekly bath. Yeah, we bathed once a week. And get this, being the youngest in the house, I was always last to use the bath after my dad, mum and sister in that order. And you know where this is heading, we all used the same bathwater.

Then it was a cheese sandwich, Bully and bed and the dread of going back to school. Dear god, what a miserable time! Thank you, Dragon 32, for saving my sanity and giving me some purpose! *

> "Sundays were the worst. EVERYTHING was shut. This is not an exaggeration"



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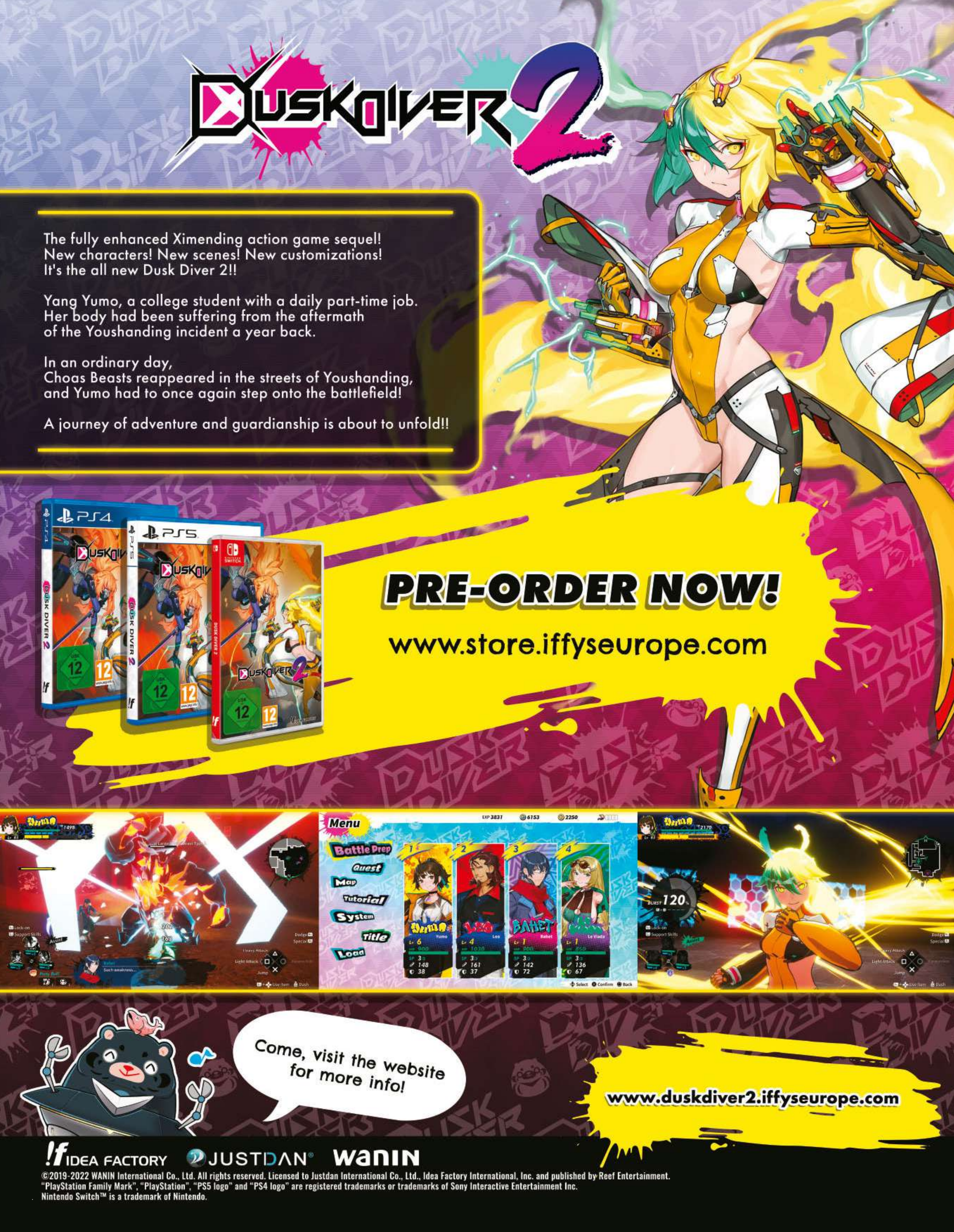
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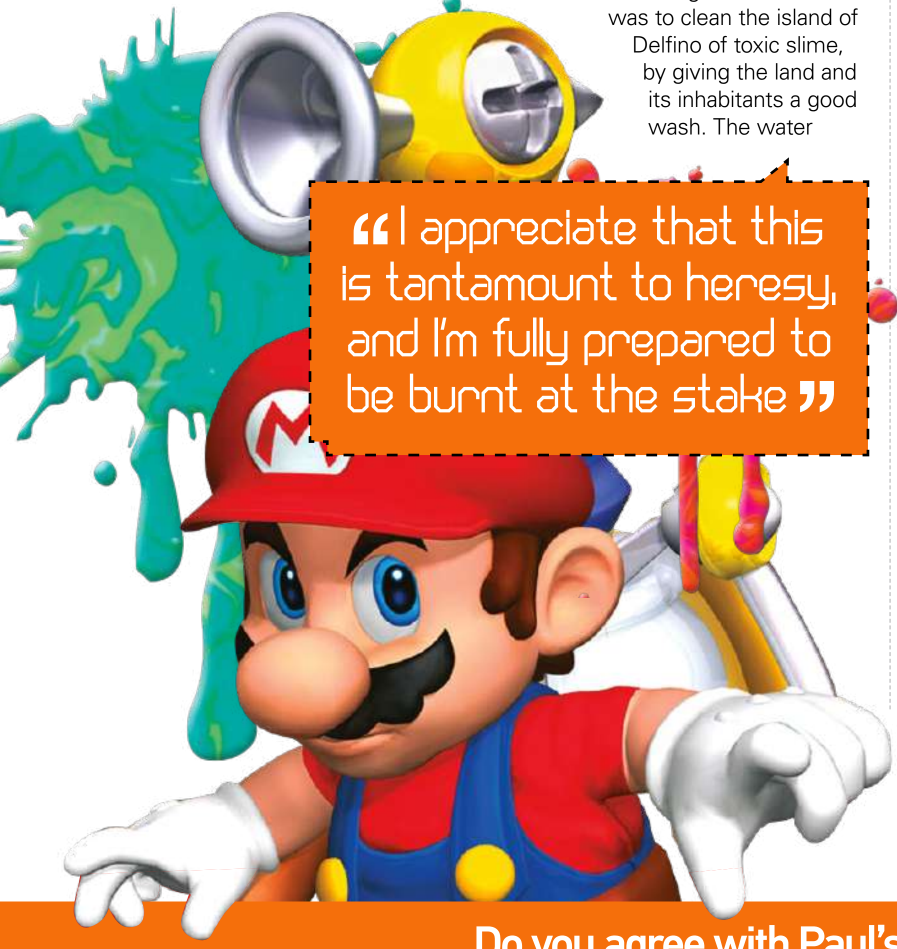
Who is Paul Rose?
Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

Feel the sunshine

This year marks the 20th anniversary of *Super Mario Sunshine*. It tends to be the one most overlooked when considering the history of the *Mario* series, but having gone back to it recently I've concluded it deserves better than that. It's much like *Super Mario Bros 2* in that it looks, sounds and smells like a *Mario* game… while introducing a unique central gameplay conceit that isn't exactly universally loved.

Whereas *Super Mario Bros 2* (we can argue whether it's even a legitimate *Mario* game some other time) featured vegetable-lobbing… *Sunshine* introduced the world to FLUDD – a forerunner, in many respects, to Nintendo's own *Splatoon*. I'm sure you're all familiar with the idea, but Mario's main goal in *Sunshine* was to clean the island of Delfino of toxic slime, by giving the land and its inhabitants a good wash. The water cannon he used to carry out this task could also double-up as a water jetpack (pre-dating the real-life water jetpack by some eight years, apparently). Plus, in typical Nintendo style, it found countless other ways to utilise it.



> "I appreciate that this is tantamount to heresy, and I'm fully prepared to be burnt at the stake"

Sunshine and *Super Mario Bros 2* were both critical and commercial hits at the time, but their positions in the series' rankings seem to have slipped. I find this strange, because even though *Super Mario 64* might hold the distinction of being the most iconic of the 3D *Mario* games, *Sunshine* is a better game in my opinion.

To play it now, it's astonishing how well it has aged. *Mario 64* by comparison looks and plays like a fossil. Even at the time I struggled with it, in all honesty. Though I could appreciate how advanced it was, and how influential it would become, I never found it the most enjoyable of experiences. It's also incredibly ugly, and I'll happily fight anybody who says otherwise.

In contrast, *Sunshine* set the visual template for all *Mario* games going forwards, and the jetpack mechanic made navigating the 3D world far more pleasurable than its predecessor. *Mario 64* always felt to me like a bold first step, adopting all the *Mario* iconography without fully succeeding in making it feel like a true representation of Mario in 3D. I appreciate that this is tantamount to heresy, and I'm fully prepared to be burnt at the stake.

Sunshine, however, nailed it for me. It's a quantum jump (no pun intended) from *Mario 64*, while *Super Mario Galaxy*, *Super Mario Galaxy 2*, *3D Land* and *3D World*, and even *Odyssey* all feel like extensions of the ideas and look that *Sunshine* laid down. Put *Mario 64* side by side with any of those games, and – yes, stop booing – it looks like something that's been living in a belfry for most of its life.

FLUDD – as with the whole root vegetable-lobbing from *Super Mario Bros 2* – may have been dropped after *Sunshine* (apart from a notable appearance in *Super Smash Bros Brawl*), but it was never meant to point the way forward. It was a self-contained idea, and despite being dismissed by some as a gimmick… it was a gimmick that ensured the *Mario* franchise would thrive in a 3D world. *

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

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Start date ☐☐☐☐ Expiry date ☐☐☐☐ Issue no. ☐☐ Maestro only Security no. ☐☐☐ on signature strip

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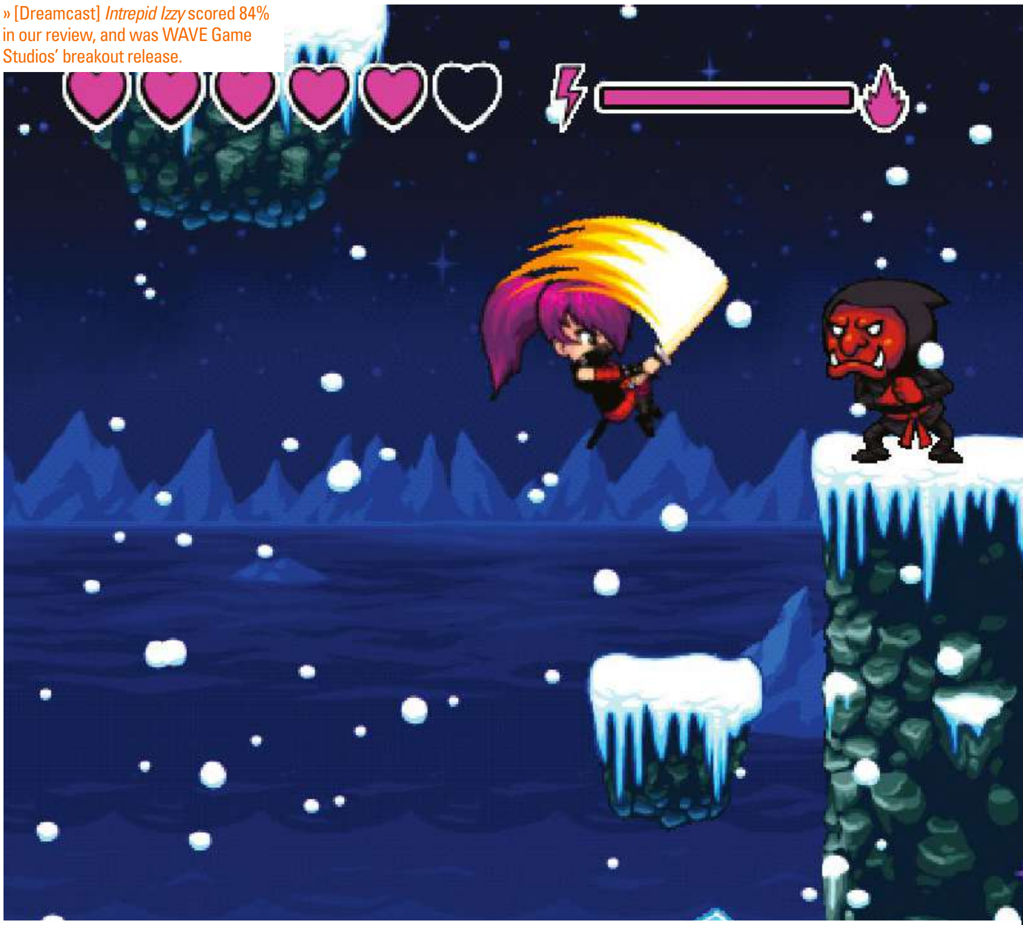
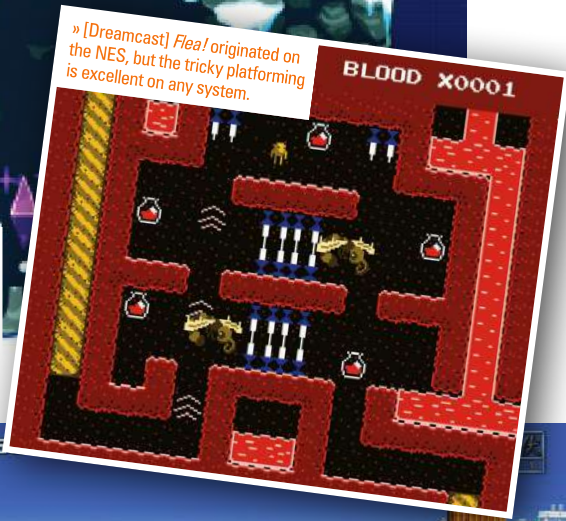


» [Dreamcast] *Intrepid Izzy* scored 84% in our review, and was WAVE Game Studios' breakout release.



» [Dreamcast] *Flea!* originated on the NES, but the tricky platforming is excellent on any system.

WAVE Game Studios

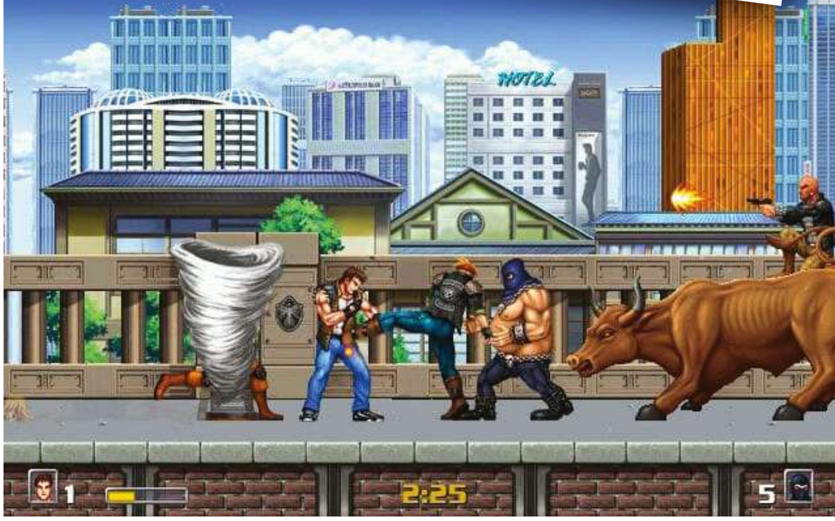
Daniel Crocker talks making waves in the Dreamcast scene

In the last year, WAVE Game Studios has been troubling the wallets of Dreamcast owners with high-quality physical releases of games such as *Intrepid Izzy, Postal* and *Shadow Gangs,* and has even produced the first Dreamcast demo disc in 20 years for *Sega Powered* magazine. We spoke to Daniel Crocker, who runs the publisher with his brother Nick, to find out more about its rapid ascent.

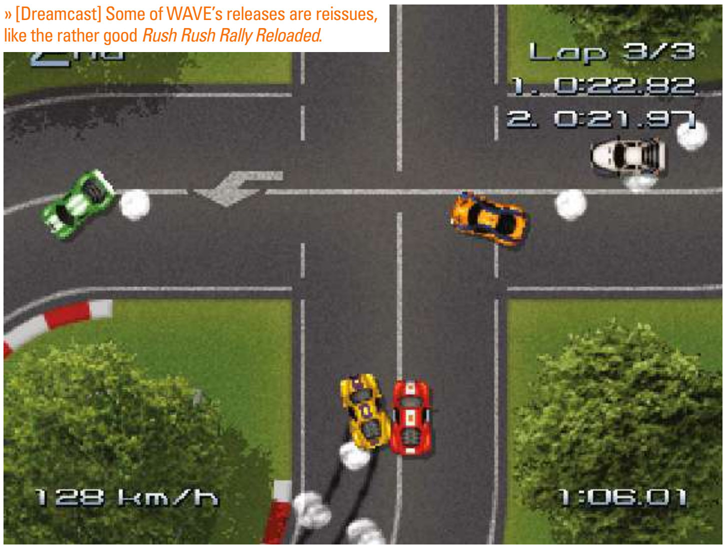
How did you and Nick come to form WAVE Game Studios?

We started off in the homebrew scene in about 2003, we were modders for Senile Team's *Beats Of Rage* engine. So the indie scene was always something that we were aware of and any time a new release would come out, we would grab it because [it was] something for our beloved system. But the modern incarnation of WAVE started in about 2015, and we started purely as a distributor of games. We would basically contact indie developers and say, "Hey, can we help sell your games to retro game shops?" The pandemic is when we really started to put some time into this, and I suppose it's like with a lot of people, we just had a lot of excess time. And we fall back to, "When we were kids, what did we want to do?" And the answer is we wanted to be involved in the games industry in some way. We know a lot of developers and we know a lot of store owners, so we thought, "Why don't we just turn that up to 11?"

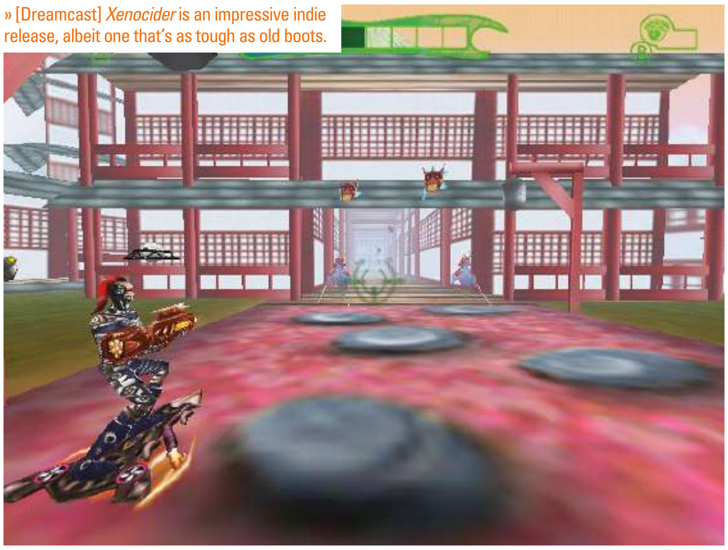
So it was May 2021, *Intrepid Izzy* was about to come out. I was talking to Roel [van Mastbergen],



» [Dreamcast] The arcade-style scrolling beat-'em-up *Shadow Gangs* is WAVE's latest Dreamcast release.



» [Dreamcast] Some of WAVE's releases are reissues, like the rather good *Rush Rush Rally Reloaded.*



» [Dreamcast] *Xenocider* is an impressive indie release, albeit one that's as tough as old boots.

the developer, and we came to the conclusion that it was going to be very, very difficult for him to ship to the UK because at that time, Brexit was a new thing. So I said to him, "I will distribute in the UK for you," because we've had that experience, we have the connections. It went much better than we expected, and I think better than he expected. And we said, "You know, we can do this with more games."

Your plan is to release a Dreamcast game every month this year, which is a big ramp up in the release schedule. How confident were you that there was a solid market for what is, to most people, an obsolete system?

I'd be lying if I said I had 100% confidence. But I knew that there's a lot of indie content out there, and there's a lot of people that don't know about it. Because we have experience in marketing, I thought to myself, "Look, if you can market anything else, then there's no reason why you can't market a new product into a sector where most of the products currently are older products that are used." That is where the vast majority of our content is sold into, independent retro gaming shops.

> "I knew that there's a lot of indie content out there, and a lot of people don't know it"
>
> **DANIEL CROCKER**

How hard was it to put that line-up together?

Some are definitely harder to convince than others. I think what helped was the fact that *Intrepid Izzy* did well, partly due to the fact that it's an awesome game. Straight after that, we were contacted by YouTuber John Riggs who had made this NES game called *Yeah Yeah Beebiss II*. He made a few copies for Dreamcast, which were burned to CD-R. It sold out in about two minutes and because of that, there were a lot of people saying, "You need to do more of these, can we buy more?" And I guess the community wanted us to be involved in some way. So they were commenting to John saying, "These guys do it, go and speak to them."

One example of it going the other way round was you reaching out to an existing rights holders with *Postal*. How did that situation come about?

Dan Redfield, who ported it, started working on it as a hobby project in his spare time. We were following it as fans of Dreamcast and of the franchise, and a few people started suggesting on social media that maybe there should be a physical release of some kind. I messaged Dan and he was interested, so I literally just messaged Running With Scissors and I said, "Is this something that you'd be interested in?" And to my surprise, they replied, "Yes, absolutely." It took a few months to sort of negotiate all the details, but they were really receptive to the idea.

Beyond the plans for this year, are there any particular things that you want to do with Dreamcast games, or perhaps expanding beyond the Dreamcast?

So next year, we still intend on releasing a game every month, but it won't necessarily be a Dreamcast game every month. There's at least one Master System game that we're looking at, and that's a system that doesn't get a lot of independent releases. That will be really interesting to see. There's one or two Mega Drive games.

We seem to be focusing on the Sega side of things for some reason – that's not a deliberate decision, it's just that's what's available. There's the potential for some NES games, though. *

POSTAL
POSTAL
GAME DISC
NOT INTENDED FOR AUDIENCES UNDER THE AGE OF 18
Dreamcast

» WAVE's releases display a high level of professionalism, with attractive artwork and properly pressed CDs.

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

NOVEMBER 2005 – The HD generation arrives as the Xbox 360 touches down in North America, while publishers battle for one last big Christmas spend on the existing consoles. Nick Thorpe winds up the Wayback Machine to relive the hype

NEWS NOVEMBER 2005

A number of famous figures died this month. The first was Eddie Guerrero on 13 November, a former WWE champion who passed away at the age of 38 due to heart failure. Japanese-American actor Pat Morita, best known for his role as Mr Miyagi in *The Karate Kid*, passed away at 73 on 24 November. The next day, 2001 World Rally Championship winner Richard Burns passed away at the age of 34 due to a brain tumour. Also on 25 November, Northern Irish football legend George Best passed away after a kidney infection.

On 15 November, Sony BMG announced a mass recall of music CDs containing the controversial XCP copy protection software. As well as interfering with CD copying programs, this software was hidden from the user, made difficult to uninstall and created vulnerabilities on the user's system. Approximately two million CDs contained the software, and many remained on shelves despite the recall. By the end of the year, Texas, New York and California had all filed class action lawsuits on behalf of consumers. The Federal Trade Commission agreed a settlement with Sony BMG in 2007, requiring it to compensate users whose computers were damaged, up to $150.

» Production lines struggled to keep up with demand for the Xbox 360 as Christmas approached.

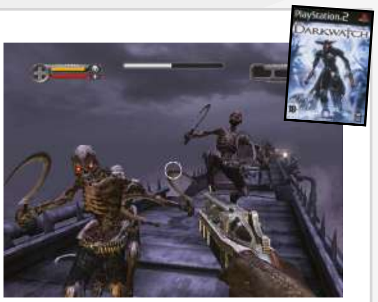
THE LATEST NEWS FROM NOVEMBER 2005

Microsoft officially ushered in a new generation when it launched the Xbox 360 in the USA and Canada on 22 November. Supplies of the console couldn't match demand, but Microsoft was able to get 326,000 consoles into the hands of eager players in its first five days on sale. Eighteen games accompanied the system on launch day, and the runaway success of the bunch was Activision's first-person shooter *Call Of Duty 2*, which was bought by 251,000 players – over three quarters of new owners. EA's *Madden NFL 06* and *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* were the next best-selling games, while *Ridge Racer 6* sold a little over 9,000 copies, which will surely have disappointed Namco.

We also got our first Xbox 360 reviews, courtesy of *Xbox 360: The Official Magazine*. *Call Of Duty 2* earned 9/10, and was described as "an enthralling shooter, with some fantastic setpieces we're aching to get back to". Rare's first-person shooter sequel *Perfect Dark Zero* also scored 9/10, earning praise for "the exceptional replay value both offline and on, the multitude of weapons you'll entertain yourself with for weeks" and "top looks". Rare's adventure *Kameo: Elements Of Power* got 9/10 too. The game, which had its roots way back on the GameCube, was said to offer "the most visually spectacular worlds yet seen in a videogame" and "ingenious puzzles", but the reviewer was disappointed that "there's hardly ever a sense of danger or difficulty". *Quake 4* and Sega's horror game *Condemned: Criminal Origins* both scored 8/10, while *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06* and Wild West adventure *Gun* each earned 7/10. EA's *NBA Live 06* was the sole recipient of the issue's lowest score, taking 6/10 due to excessive slowdown.

» [Xbox] If you wanted some current-generation shooting, *Battlefield 2* would have to do.
BATTLEFIELD 2
EA

» [Xbox 360] Settle in, there will be plenty more "*Call Of Duty* sells well" in years to come.



[PS2] Maybe you wanted to shoot skeletons in *Darkwatch*? That could be arranged.

» [GameCube] Or maybe you preferred ancient warfare instead? Sega had you covered in *Spartan: Total Warrior*.

The existing top console wasn't about to go quietly though, with game of the year contender *Resident Evil 4* finally appearing on the PS2 and bagging 10/10 from the *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*. Sony was also courting the casual crowd with *Singstar 80s*. The karaoke game earned 8/10 from the official magazine, which concluded that, "Themed editions are definitely the way forward." The Sony-published *Genji*, a historical Japanese hack-and-slash adventure produced by ex-Capcom man Yoshiki Okamoto, earned a paltry 4/10 from *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine* which felt the game to be "a strange and giant leap back to restrictive, basic gaming".

Multi-platform game of the month was *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat*, earning 9.0/10 from *Official Xbox Magazine* and 9/10 from *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*. The latter felt that the game's missions would be "nothing special" elsewhere, but "thanks to the ability to be almost everywhere at once, sampling a vast range of hardware as you go, the trad-shooter gameplay suddenly gets an invigorating kick in the pants". *Darkwatch* proved to be a surprising favourite too, earning 8.0/10 from *OXM* and 8/10 from *Official PS2*. The horror Western first-person shooter also earned 8/10 from *XBM*, which enjoyed the game's vampire powers and lauded it for having "a Todd McFarlane attitude and a Marilyn Manson edge".

Of course, GameCube owners were probably feeling a bit left out. Annual sports releases aside, the only multi-platform game to see release on Nintendo's purple box was *Spartan: Total Warrior*. The hack-and-slash spin-off of *Total War* earned 82% in *NGC*, as well as 7/10 in *Edge*, 8/10 in *XBM* and similar scores elsewhere. *NGC* was impressed with the wealth of characters the engine could move, and thought it "the most deliciously bloodthirsty thing we've played in a very long time".

The DS was at least picking up steam. Pet simulator *Nintendogs* showed the first signs of Nintendo broadening its audience for the DS and earned 5/5 from *NGC*, which reviewed the game in diary form. Konami's vampire-slaying sequel *Castlevania: Dawn Of Sorrow* scored 7/10 in *Edge*, 4/5 in *NGC* and 8.9/10 in *Cube*, with all three praising the basic game structure and criticising poor use of the console's unique features. Importers could also sample the delights of the fantastic music game *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan*, which earned 4/5 in *NGC* and 9.1/10 in *Cube*, with the latter recommending importing.

Next month, the Xbox 360 arrives in the UK. Don't miss it. *

CHARTS

NOVEMBER 2005

PLAYSTATION 2

1 – Brian Lara International Cricket (Codemasters)
2 – Medal Of Honor: European Assault (EA)
3 – Cricket 2005 (EA)
4 – Lego Star Wars (Eidos)
5 – Resident Evil Outbreak: File #2 (Capcom)

XBOX

1 – Delta Force: Black Hawk Down (Novalogic)
2 – Brian Lara International Cricket (Codemasters)
3 – Moto GP: Ultimate Racing Technology 3 (THQ)
4 – Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)
5 – Super Monkey Ball Deluxe (Sega)

GAMECUBE

1 – Resident Evil 4 (Capcom)
2 – Charlie And The Chocolate Factory (Take 2)
3 – Killer7 (Capcom)
4 – Fantastic 4 (Activision)
5 – Madagascar (Activision)

MUSIC

1 – Hung Up (Madonna)
2 – Your Raise Me Up (Westlife)
3 – Ticket Outta Loserville (Son Of Dork)
4 – No Worries (Simon Webbe)
5 – I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor (Arctic Monkeys)

THIS MONTH IN…

Xbox 360: The Official Magazine

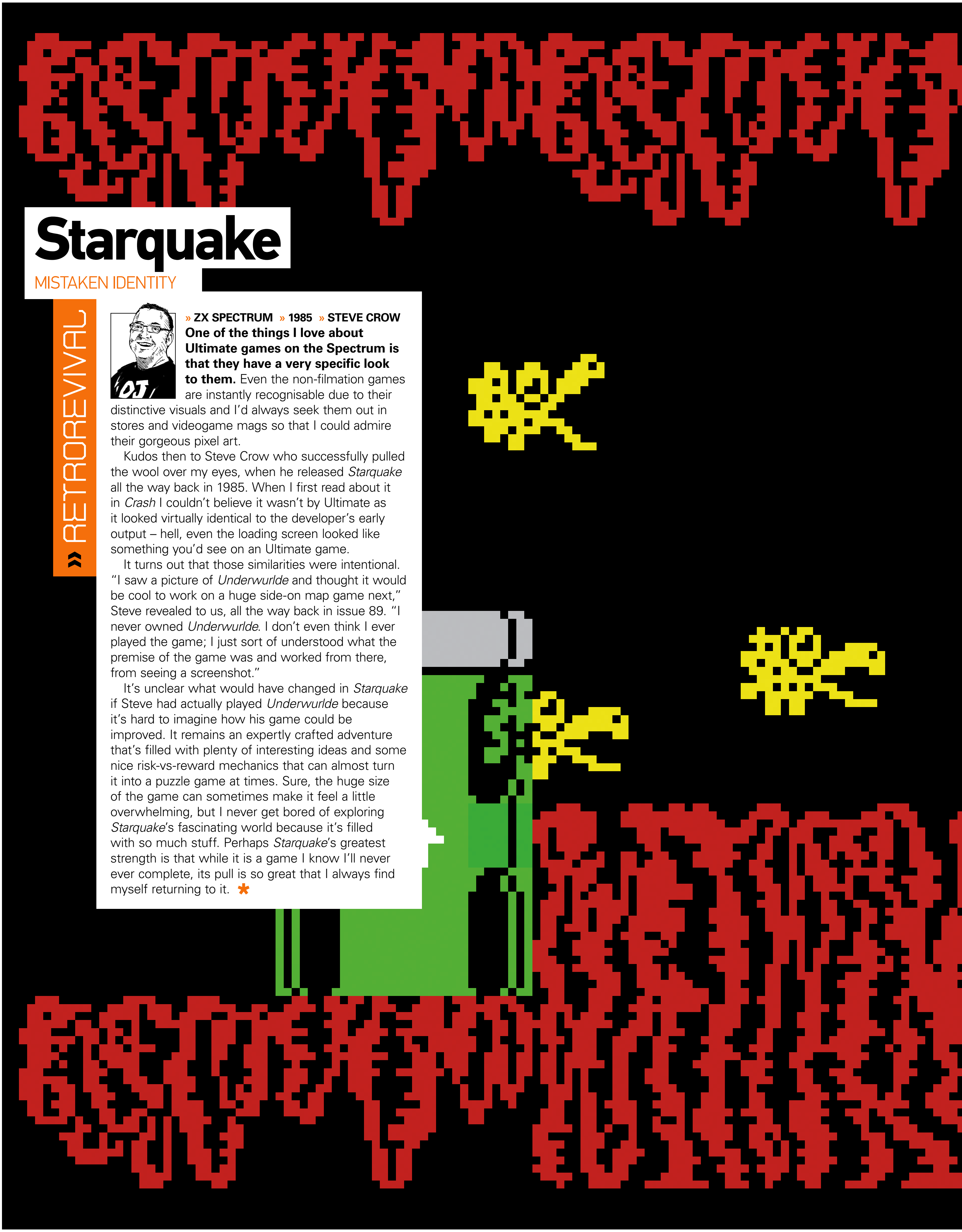
"I heard that Snoop is a really big *Madden* fan. I mean, he could probably beat me really bad, but I'm not someone who's afraid of a bit of competition," says Will Smith collaborator Jazzy Jeff. "So Snoop, if you're out there, we need to get in a game."

Cube

"It's Tim's last issue as sub editor and he's very happy about it indeed. He really wanted to be a sub editor when he joined, then he found out they don't get to write, play games, go on trips, get sent cool free stuff and generally blag." Let's not tell 2005 Tim about 2022 Tim.

Edge

"The provisional but reassuring title of Yuji Naka's next-generation *Sonic* says a dozen times more than the early screens," says a preview of *Sonic The Hedgehog*. "After a generation of near-death experiences, the kiss of life can't come soon enough."



Starquake

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

» ZX SPECTRUM » 1985 » STEVE CROW

One of the things I love about Ultimate games on the Spectrum is that they have a very specific look to them. Even the non-filmation games are instantly recognisable due to their distinctive visuals and I'd always seek them out in stores and videogame mags so that I could admire their gorgeous pixel art.

Kudos then to Steve Crow who successfully pulled the wool over my eyes, when he released *Starquake* all the way back in 1985. When I first read about it in *Crash* I couldn't believe it wasn't by Ultimate as it looked virtually identical to the developer's early output – hell, even the loading screen looked like something you'd see on an Ultimate game.

It turns out that those similarities were intentional. "I saw a picture of *Underwurlde* and thought it would be cool to work on a huge side-on map game next," Steve revealed to us, all the way back in issue 89. "I never owned *Underwurlde*. I don't even think I ever played the game; I just sort of understood what the premise of the game was and worked from there, from seeing a screenshot."

It's unclear what would have changed in *Starquake* if Steve had actually played *Underwurlde* because it's hard to imagine how his game could be improved. It remains an expertly crafted adventure that's filled with plenty of interesting ideas and some nice risk-vs-reward mechanics that can almost turn it into a puzzle game at times. Sure, the huge size of the game can sometimes make it feel a little overwhelming, but I never get bored of exploring *Starquake*'s fascinating world because it's filled with so much stuff. Perhaps *Starquake*'s greatest strength is that while it is a game I know I'll never ever complete, its pull is so great that I always find myself returning to it. *

35 YEARS OF STREET FIGHTER

A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

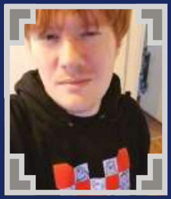
FEW SERIES TRANSCEND THE GAMING BUSINESS, BUT STREET FIGHTER HAS COME TO BE MORE THAN JUST A COLLECTION OF GAMES – IT'S A YARDSTICK BY WHICH ITS GENRE IS MEASURED, AND A BELOVED ICON OF POP CULTURE. DEVELOPERS AND FANS TELL US WHY CAPCOM'S CLASSIC IS SUCH A UNIQUE PROPERTY

WORDS BY NICK THORPE

MATT EDWARDS

CHRIS MOYSE

IAN SLUTZ


JON KLIMAS

JOSEPH K GARRAHAN

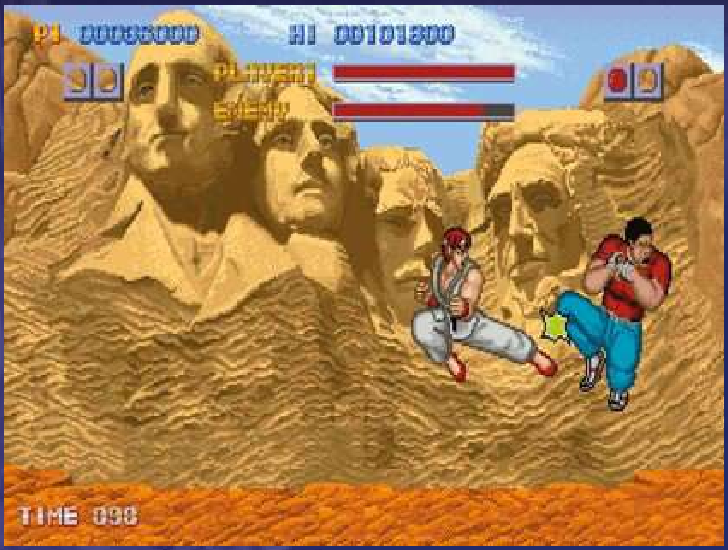
SCOTT MCCRAE

STEVEN MANE

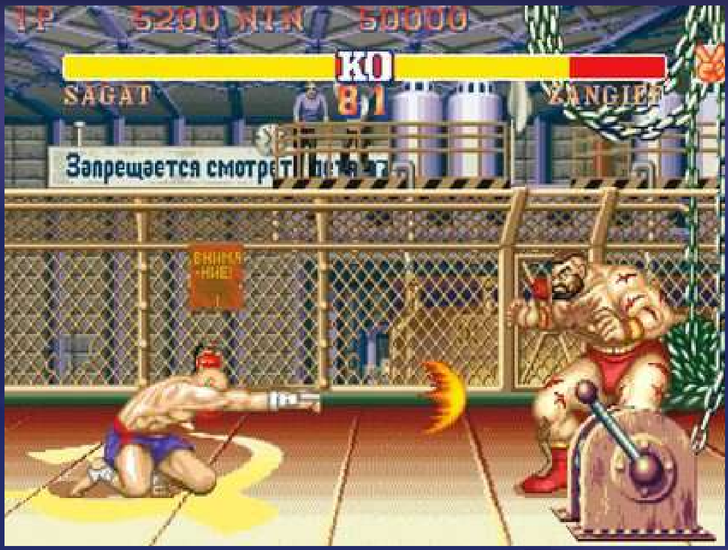
Have you ever come across one of those brands that just seems to be everywhere? You probably remember kids doing *Fortnite* dances at each other, and if you've got a young daughter, you'll doubtless be familiar with the Japanese icon Hello Kitty. If you have any interest at all in films or geek culture, the dominance of Marvel characters is overwhelming. All of these properties are united not only by their popularity, but by their association with another pop culture phenomenon – *Street Fighter.* Yes, Capcom's series is best known for 35 years of excellent digital fighting, but its influence reaches far beyond the realm of videogames and into film, comics, music, crossovers and more.

You don't have to look hard for proof of this, either. You might have been a fan of the band Hadouken, or picked up the *Champion Edition* version of Sonic Boom Six's EP *Sounds To Consume.* Plenty of people saw Peter Griffin name drop Blanka and Guile when naming his children on *Family Guy,* and others will have spotted Zangief and M Bison in a support group for videogame villains in *Wreck-It Ralph.* Even other videogames have cheeky nods here and there – if you take a close look at the fighters that Rugal has defeated and turned to statues in *The King Of Fighters '94*, you'll see some very familiar faces.

It's fair to say that 35 years ago, nobody would have predicted the future success of the series. "I first encountered the original *Street Fighter* in a corner at a local pizza place," says Joseph K Garrahan, a 3D character animator with credits on *The Last Of Us Part II* and the 2013 *Killer Instinct* reboot. "The large character sprites were interesting but the controls felt a bit clunky." That's an assessment that wouldn't have been out of place in any UK magazine of the time – *Street Fighter* was considered to be graphically exciting and momentarily diverting, but also something of a novelty due to the pressure-sensitive rubber attack buttons. Nick Kelly of *Commodore User* voiced a common concern in questioning whether it would amount to "much more than a novel experiment in coin-op technology", and while it wasn't a bust, it wasn't a revolution either. ▶


P1 00033000
HI 00101300
PLAYER
ENEMY
TIME 098

» [Arcade] The original *Street Fighter* feels dated, but its special moves would define future fighting games.


SAGAT
KO
81
ZANGIEF

» [Arcade] *Street Fighter II* defined many key character archetypes, including bruising grapplers like Zangief.

SIX DEGREES OF RYU

IS STREET FIGHTER'S BEST-KNOWN CHARACTER THE CENTRE OF THE GAMING UNIVERSE?

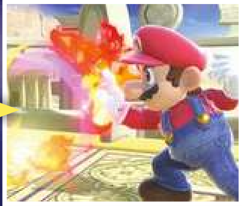
RYU

RYU NUMBER 1

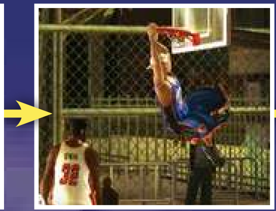
RYU NUMBER 2

RYU NUMBER 3

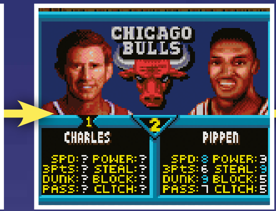
RYU NUMBER 4



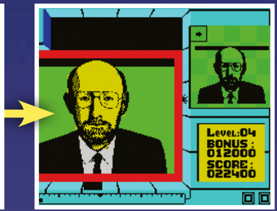
MARIO
SUPER SMASH BROS ULTIMATE



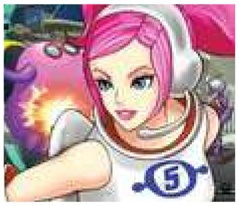
MCA
NBA STREET V3


CHICAGO BULLS
1
2
CHARLES
PIPPEN
SPD:? POWER:?
3Pts:? STEAL:?
DUNK:? BLOCK:?
PASS:? CLTCH:?
SPD:8 POWER:3
3Pts:6 STEAL:9
DUNK:9 BLOCK:5
PASS:7 CLTCH:5

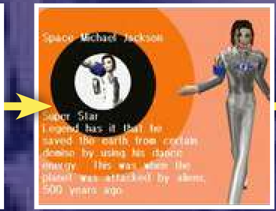
PRINCE CHARLES
NBA JAM: TOURNAMENT EDITION


Level:04
BONUS:
012000
SCORE:
022400

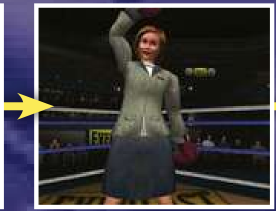
CLIVE SINCLAIR
SPLIT PERSONALITIES



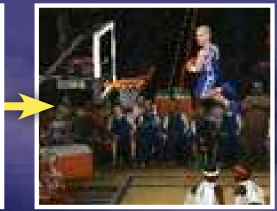
ULALA
PROJECT X ZONE


Space Michael Jackson
Super Star

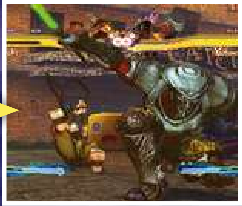
MICHAEL JACKSON
SPACE CHANNEL 5



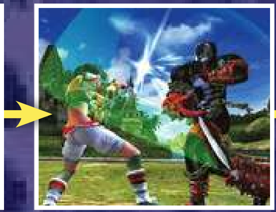
HILLARY CLINTON
READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING: ROUND 2



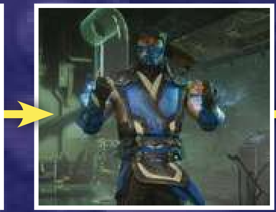
JOE BIDEN
NBA JAM



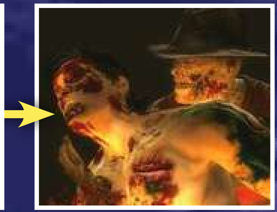
YOSHIMITSU
STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN



SPAWN
SOULCALIBUR II



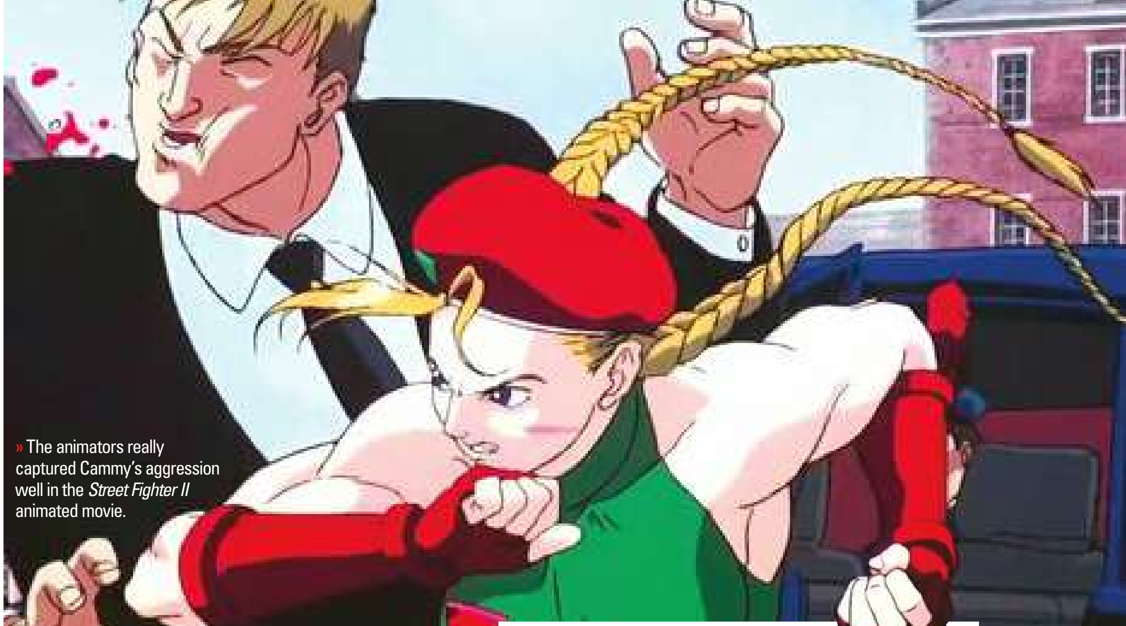
SUB-ZERO
MORTAL KOMBAT 11



FREDDY KRUEGER
MORTAL KOMBAT (2011)

■ Some of you may be familiar with the game *Six Degrees Of Kevin Bacon* – if not, it involves picking an actor and finding their Bacon Number, the fewest steps to prolific actor Kevin Bacon. For example, Idris Elba has a Bacon Number of two, because he was in *The Unborn* with Rhys Coiro, who was in *One Way* with Kevin Bacon. In the world of videogames, Ryu is the best analogue to Kevin Bacon. The rules, set by the Twitter account @RyuNumber, are that the connection must be in a commercial videogame, cannot be a time-limited promotion (such as the *Fortnite* crossover) and must involve unique identifiable individuals.

Even with those constraints, there are plenty of surprising people with Ryu Numbers. For example, Ryu can fight Mario in *Super Smash Bros Ultimate*. The GameCube version of *NBA Street V3* allows Mario to share a court with MCA of the Beastie Boys, and he could find himself facing down Prince Charles in *NBA Jam Tournament Edition*. Therefore, Prince Charles has a Ryu Number of three. There are some more examples above, but give it a go and see who you can connect to Ryu.



» The animators really captured Cammy's aggression well in the *Street Fighter II* animated movie.

By contrast, *Street Fighter II* was a revolution. "Whispers came through magazines of this brand-new fighting game taking Japan and the US by storm, and once it started showing up in UK arcades, me and my friends were absolutely hooked," says Chris Moyse, senior editor at Destructoid. "It wasn't even just in arcades, you could find *Street Fighter II* in video stores, chip shops, laundrettes, everywhere." Ian Slutz, senior character systems designer at 343 Industries, remembers the same being true in the US. "When *Street Fighter II* came about, it became the most ubiquitous cabinet. Normally you'd compare notes, you'd be like, 'OK, the 7-Eleven has this game, and this other place has that game,' but suddenly almost everywhere had a *Street Fighter* cabinet."

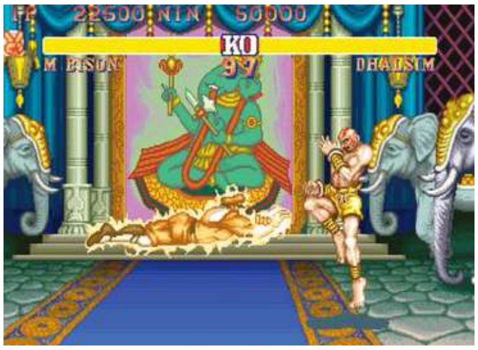
What made the game so special? It's easy to argue that it's the fighting engine, which was easily better than anything else available at the time, but that was an unknown quantity to anyone who had yet to drop a coin in the slot. Rather, it was the decision to move away from a single generic martial artist and introduce a bold, colourful and varied cast of characters. "I know I tried to mess around with Guile because he was the American character," says Ian. "But he didn't really match my style of playing and I couldn't do any of the fireball or dragon punch motions when I started playing, so the character that really stuck with me was E Honda."

The characters didn't just provide wide appeal, but a depth of interaction that quickly birthed a flourishing competitive scene. "We've been running what you would now call esports-style tournaments since 1991," says Capcom's Shuhei Matsumoto, producer of *Street Fighter 6*. "The success of *Street Fighter* is in the meeting of those passionate and supportive community fans and the original developers who made such great games." The need to support those aspects of the game was quickly recognised. "Capcom kept adding new characters, stages and extra words to the title. This made the hype last for years," says Joseph. "Bootleg versions with weird things started popping up, also giving it an aura of mystery."

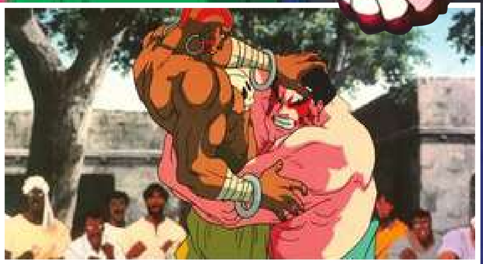
The game was just as much of a phenomenon in the home. "The SNES port was responsible for introducing a lot of UK videogame fans to importing, with people (myself included) rolling out silly amounts of money to get hold of a Japanese cart and converter," says Chris. "We held an all-Japan *Street Fighter II* tournament in the Kokugikan Arena in Tokyo," says Matsumoto, referring to a 1993 event in which the SNES version of *Street Fighter II Turbo* was played. "This is a traditional venue for sumo tournaments, so the fact that thousands of people were there for *Street Fighter* was just incredible to me." Excellent versions also arrived on the Mega Drive and PC Engine, and by the time of *Super Street Fighter II Turbo*, even the 3DO.

It didn't take long for the wider world to take notice. While Japanese readers got a serialised manga in *Family Computer Magazine*, Malibu Comics introduced a short-lived series in America. Such adaptations typically played fast and loose with the story of the series. "In the early days, it was easy to get away with almost anything, considering there wasn't that much of an in-game story to begin with," says Steven Mane, owner of the Mane Street Blog which focuses on *Street Fighter* lore. "One of my friends picked up the White Wolf *Street Fighter* pen-and-paper RPG," recalls Ian, who remembers it as being one of the stranger merchandising options to be explored. "It's just like the silliness, the incongruity of those guys making an RPG." An anime movie based on *Super Street Fighter II* was released in the summer of 1994, and went on to become one of the top five highest-grossing films of the year in Japan.

That wasn't the only film project, as Hollywood had also recognised the success of the series. "I was very used to seeing *Street Fighter II* screenshots and artwork plastered all over the likes of *CVG* and *Super Play*, but when the posters and trailers started showing up for the live-action *Street Fighter* film with Jean-Claude Van Damme, that was something else," says Matt Edwards, the *Street Fighter* brand manager at Capcom Europe. "Whatever

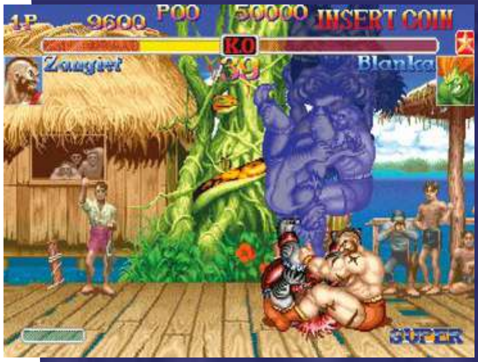


» [Arcade] M Bison is an iconic villain, and his Psycho Crusher an equally iconic attack.

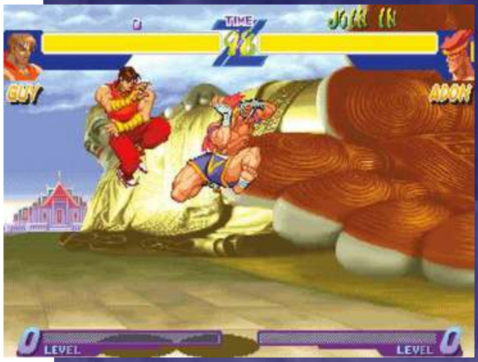


» *Street Fighter*'s first big-screen adaptation was popular in Japan, and is still exciting today.

"THE SNES PORT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR INTRODUCING A LOT OF UK VIDEOGAME FANS TO IMPORTING"
CHRIS MOYSE



» [Arcade] *Street Fighter II* catered to the competitive crowd with gameplay updates and refinements over five instalments.



» [Arcade] The *Street Fighter Alpha* series began to depart from the established visual and play styles.

you think of the film itself, this was one of the earlier signs that *Street Fighter* (and videogames in general) weren't going to stay in their lane. There was so much more to this than pixels and combos." The movie certainly wasn't popular with critics, but it rode the interest in the games to financial success, and many fans have embraced its silliness in the years since. "I have a huge soft spot for the 1994 Jean-Claude Van Damme movie," says Scott McCrae, a freelance games journalist. "It may be terrible, but man if it isn't extremely fun to watch."

The success of *Street Fighter II* paved the way for plenty of rival fighting games, both 2D and 3D, some of which inevitably became successful in their own right. To keep the series relevant, Capcom moved away from updating *Street Fighter II* and began to present its cast in new situations. The *Street Fighter Alpha* series adopted a new anime-inspired art style and provided a connection between the first and second games, as well as introducing characters from the *Final Fight* series. In 1996, *X-Men Vs Street Fighter* pitted Capcom's combatants against beloved comic-book superheroes in tag-team matches, becoming the first part of what would ultimately grow into the chaotic *Marvel Vs Capcom* series. The *Street Fighter EX* series by Arika took the series into 3D for the first time, and added some truly bizarre new cast members.

When the long-awaited *Street Fighter III* finally arrived in 1997, it was something of a misfire that failed to connect with even established fans. "I do remember going, 'Where's all the characters, where's Guile?' And I think that was the big issue a lot of people have with it," says Jon Klimas, a competitive player who won the *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* tournament at Combo Breaker 2022. "Even me as a casual back then, it's like, 'I'm gonna play my favourite characters. Oh, there's no Balrog, there's no anybody.'" Only Ryu and Ken survived the cull, though Capcom later developed two *Street Fighter III* series updates which brought back Akuma and Chun-Li. "We called it the Dark Ages, *3rd Strike* happened and then it just died for like a decade," says Geoff Mendicino, a project manager and Capcom content creator.

» [Arcade] Dhalsim's stretchy limbs make him fit right at home alongside Marvel's heroes.

» [Arcade] The likes of Sakura and Dan approach the popularity of the classic *Street Fighter II* cast.

Of course, there was plenty to enjoy for players that stuck with *Street Fighter* beyond its initial peak. While the critical reappraisal took years to come, *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike* is now widely regarded as a classic game with plenty of depth and arguably the best sprite animation ever. Fans of the story like Steven were also well catered for. "In *Alpha*, Ryu gained a fan in Sakura and a mortal enemy in Akuma, we found out the story between Chun-Li and M Bison, we got to see the origins of several characters, we got Rose, the Shadaloo Dolls and Karin Kanzuki," he explains. "In *III*, we got Alex, Ibuki, the Illuminati and the greatest mystery in gaming, Q."

Even though the *Street Fighter* series itself was no longer actively being developed by the turn of the millennium, the cast of characters was too strong to disappear. They continued to see action in crossover games like *Capcom Vs SNK*, *Marvel Vs Capcom* and later *Capcom Fighting Jam*. That ultimately allowed players to start to miss the series, and when *Street Fighter IV* was unveiled in 2008 it was greeted with a wave of massive enthusiasm. The *Street Fighter II* cast returned in full 3D glory, with the gameplay sticking to the tried and true formula with some mechanical tweaks, such as the introduction of Ultra Combos which allowed for spectacular comebacks after a big beating.

"All of a sudden, the whole game industry was all about fighting games," says Geoff. "You had the nationwide GameStop tournament, all the local shops were holding their own tournaments. It was like a resurrection of fighting games." While *Street Fighter IV* wasn't the only intriguing fighting game of the time, it was far and away the most popular, as reflected in the way it drove up attendance at Evolution 2009. "I don't think people do this any more, because it's been like 13 years, but people call people who started with *Street Fighter IV* 'O-Niners' because they started in 2009," says Jon. "Me too,

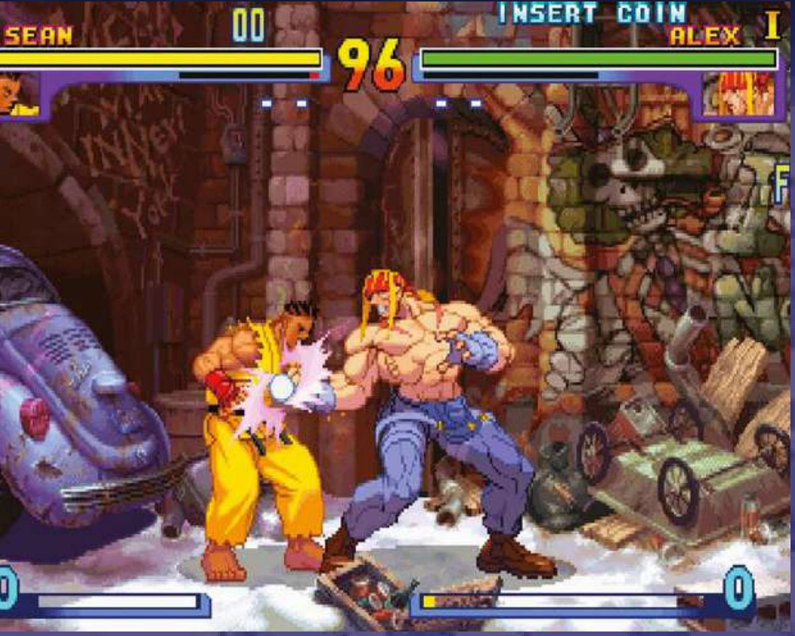
COPYCAT COMBAT

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN CAPCOM TOOK THE FIGHT TO THE COURTROOM?

Street Fighter II is well-known for inspiring a boom period in arcade fighting games, with popular games such as *Mortal Kombat*, *Virtua Fighter*, *Tekken* and *The King Of Fighters* all launching within a few years of Capcom's hit. But when *Fighter's History* hit arcades in 1993, Capcom felt that Data East's game was essentially a clone of its own and in 1994, it filed lawsuits seeking damages and a preliminary injunction to prevent distribution of the game.

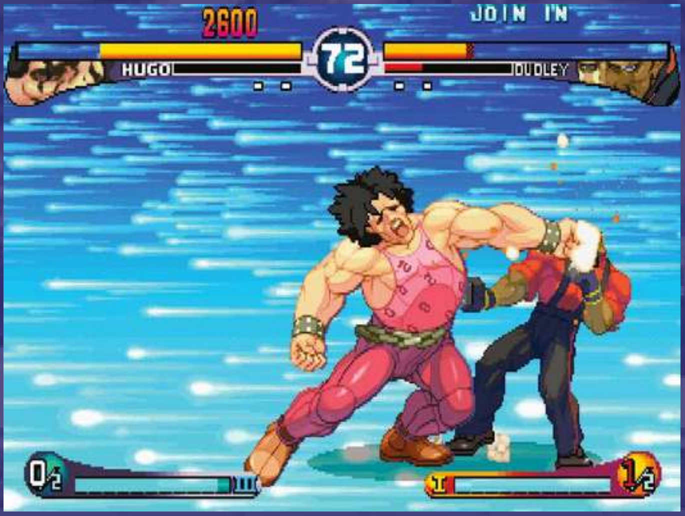
For its part, Data East had previously unsuccessfully sued Epyx over claims that *World Karate Championship* (better known as *International Karate*) had violated its own copyright in *Karate Champ*. In that case, Epyx had argued that the similarity between the two games was the simple result of making a game about karate, and Data East used a similar argument in its defence against Capcom.

In his decision, Judge William H Orrick Jr agreed that Data East had intended to imitate *Street Fighter II*. The proposal for *Fighter's History* contained 22 references to Capcom's game, and the court determined that Matlok, Feilin and Ray were similar to Guile, Chun-Li and Ken. However, many of *Street Fighter*'s moves were generic punches and kicks that could not be protected by copyright, and though some of Data East's characters were similar, they were not virtually identical and the use of recognisable character tropes was permissible. Data East ultimately prevailed, and the ruling has since served as a reference point for which aspects of a game can be protected by copyright.



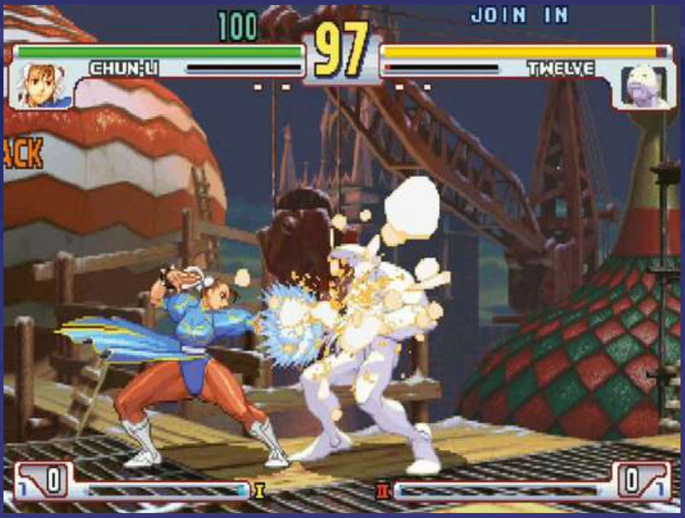
» [Arcade] Familiar faces are key to the series' appeal, which hampered the *Street Fighter III* sub-series.

> "I HAVE A HUGE SOFT SPOT FOR THE 1994 JEAN-CLAUDE VAN DAMME MOVIE. IT MAY BE TERRIBLE, BUT MAN IF IT ISN'T EXTREMELY FUN TO WATCH"
>
> **SCOTT MCCRAE**



» [Arcade] *Final Fight* has essentially become part of the *Street Fighter* universe, thanks to their shared fighters.

» [Arcade] Bringing back Chun-Li for *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike* was a popular move, but a late one.



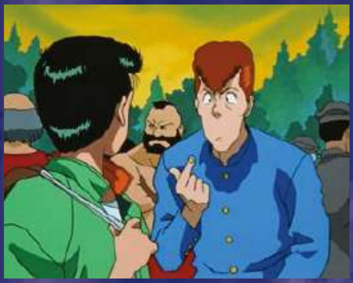
SHOUT OUTS

HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST MEMORABLE REFERENCES TO STREET FIGHTER IN FILM AND TV

YUYU HAKUSHO

1992

■ This animated adaptation of a supernatural adventure manga gives plenty of cameos to *Street Fighter II* characters in the ninth episode, The Search Begins. Fighters resembling Zangief, E Honda, Dhalsim and Ryu can all be seen in the crowd, waiting to meet the psychic master Genkai.



CITY HUNTER

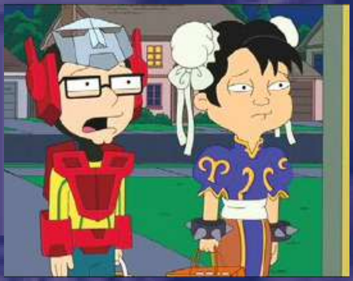
1993

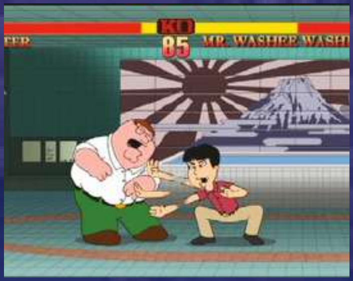
■ This Hong Kong action flick, another adaptation of a manga series, has a whole scene based around *Street Fighter II*. After Jackie Chan's character Ryo is knocked into an arcade cabinet, he hallucinates that his opponent is Ken, and eventually secures victory by adopting Chun-Li's character.

AMERICAN DAD

2010

■ In the Halloween episode *The Best Little Horror House In Langley Falls*, Steve Smith, dressed as a GoBot, takes out Akiko, dressed as Chun-Li. Toshi, Steve's friend and Akiko's brother, ends up pursuing them both with a sword after Steve breaks his promise to bring Akiko home by sundown.





FAMILY GUY

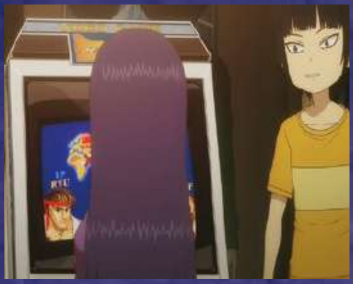
2011

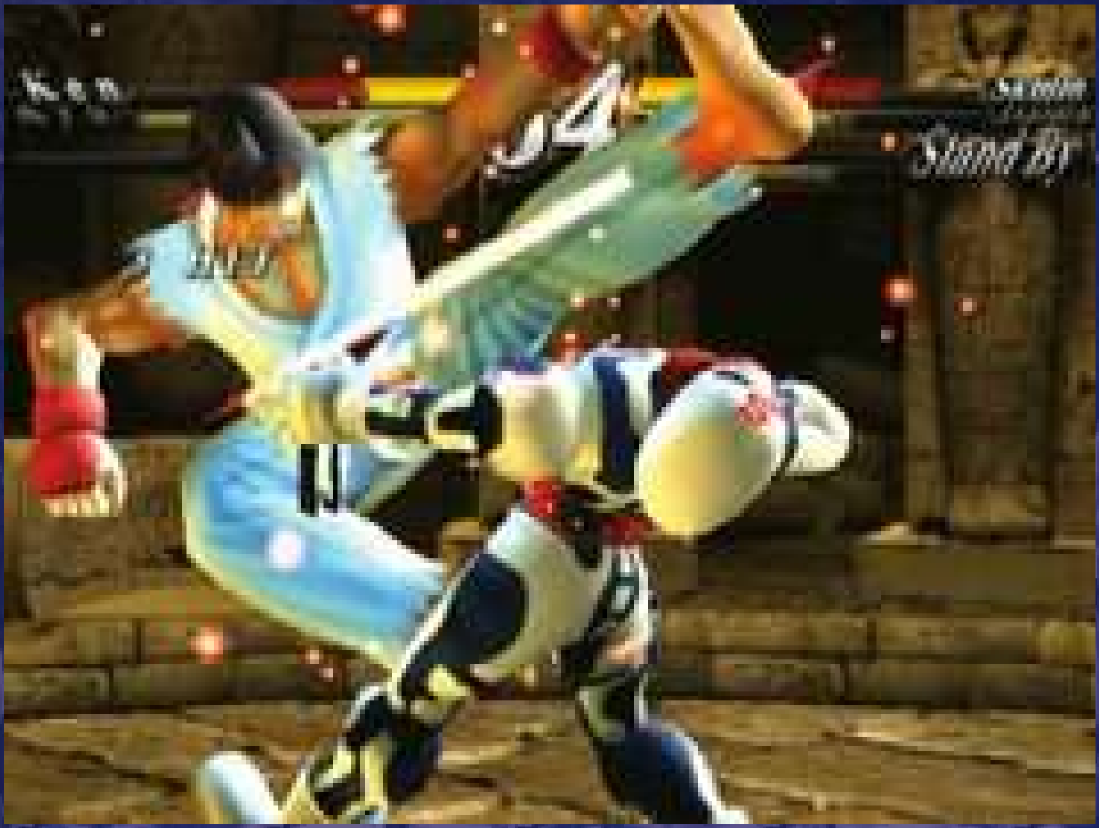
■ This one comes from the episode *Tiegs For Two*. After the local dry cleaner loses Peter Griffin's favourite shirt, Peter breaks into the cleaner's house and takes his shirt. The dispute ends up escalating into a *Street Fighter II* tribute fight, in which Peter uses Ryu and Ken's moves and loses.

HI SCORE GIRL

2018

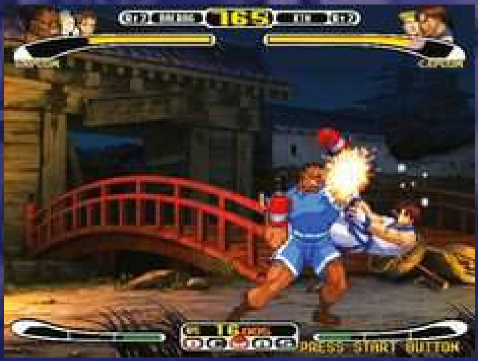
■ Yet another manga adaptation, and one packed with *Street Fighter* shout outs, as it follows Haruo Yaguchi, who begins a rivalry with his rich, talented classmate Akira Ono after she destroys him in a game of *Street Fighter II*. The game remains key to the plot throughout the entire series.



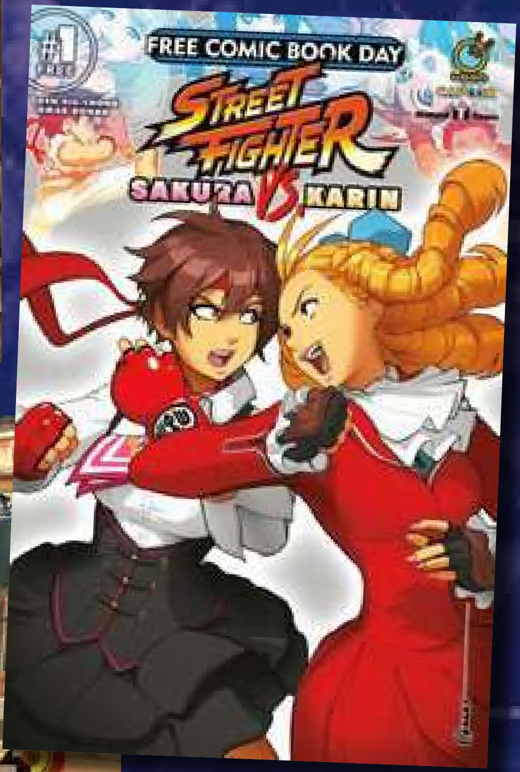


» [PS2] Arika's *Street Fighter EX* characters, like Skullomania, never crossed over into the main series.

> "I REMEMBER GOING TO THAT EVO WHEN STREET FIGHTER V CAME OUT AND THERE WERE MORE THAN 5,000 PEOPLE IN THAT TOURNAMENT"
>
> **JON KLIMAS**



» [Arcade] The *Street Fighter* cast was mainly used for crossover games between 2000 and 2007.



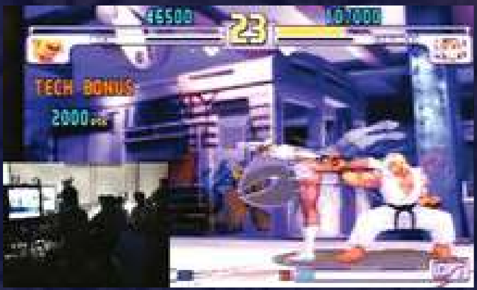
» Udon's comic books are great for fans who want to know the characters better.

EVO MOMENT 37

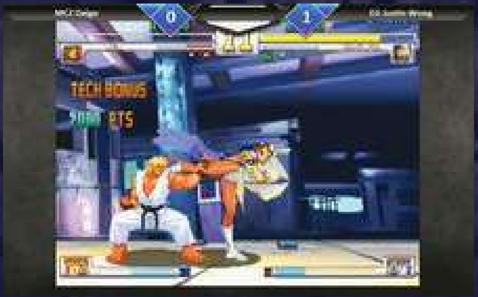
WHY DAIGO'S EPIC PARRY IS THE GREATEST PRO GAMING MOMENT EVER

■ We'd honestly be surprised if anybody reading this hadn't seen this sensational moment in competitive *Street Fighter*. During a game of *3rd Strike*, Justin Wong's Chun-Li has a commanding life lead over Daigo Umehara's Ken, but Daigo mounts an impressive comeback – unable to block because chip damage will kill him, he parries a full super combo before executing his own to win the round. It became a viral video in 2004, which is extremely impressive when you consider that it couldn't be uploaded to YouTube because YouTube didn't yet exist. As well as inspiring many to revise their opinions of *3rd Strike*, the clip was responsible for alerting many to competitive *Street Fighter*. "That blew up everywhere, everyone's seen it," says Jon Klimas. "And then after that I was like, 'Oh, those people play this game competitively?'"

What makes this moment so special is that it has more in common with the best moments in offline sports than other esports moments. You don't have to understand football to appreciate a goal from a long range, curling free kick, nor golf to be impressed by a hole in one. Most esports highlights require some functional knowledge of the game in question to understand them, and when you know the difficulty of the timing involved in the parry, it's all the more impressive. However, the Daigo parry is very easy to understand – even if you know nothing about *Street Fighter*, you get the sense that you're watching a master at work.



» The video ends with "You had to be there". We disagree – it's utterly captivating on video too.



» Daigo repeated the feat in an exhibition rematch ten years later, but didn't win the match.

I'm an O-Niner, just because that's when I tried to start playing the game competitively. And I think a buttload of people did too."

Much like *Street Fighter II*, *Street Fighter IV* had a long shelf life thanks to its many updates, serving as the main focus of the competitive scene for seven years. "I remember staying up till early hours of the morning watching Evo 2011's *Super Street Fighter IV* finals," says Scott. "While the esports side of it has definitely gotten bigger since, *Street Fighter IV*'s run definitely felt like the high point in terms of casual and competitive hype [during my time as a fan]." *Street Fighter V* arrived on a similar wave of anticipation, too. "I remember going to that Evo when *Street Fighter V* came out and there were more than 5,000 people in that tournament," Jon tells us. "I think it was the biggest *Street Fighter* event period, because 5,000 people is a staggering amount even for something like Evo."

With *Street Fighter 6* on the way, *Street Fighter V* is now reaching the end of its own life cycle, having consistently been one of the most played games in the fighting scene. But while the latest entry in the series usually takes the lion's share of participation, the older games maintain their own dedicated followings. "One of the unique aspects of *Street Fighter* is that the battle system changes with each main numbered entry," says Matsumoto. "For this reason, people still play the previous main games like *Street Fighter II*, *Street Fighter III* and *Street Fighter IV*, even when *Street Fighter V* is the current game. There are even tournaments for the past entries still running! I think that's amazing." Indeed, when Jon won the *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* event at Combo Breaker 2022, he was at the head of a very healthy field of 87 competitors.

But for all of the joy of winning, it's the sense of community around *Street Fighter* that keeps players coming back. "I used to work in the game industry, at Modus Games. In 2020 COVID happened, I wanted to go home, be close with my parents and all that stuff. This is my first time in California again for three years," says Geoff. "Yesterday was my birthday, actually, and I went to a bar that was run by a *Street Fighter* diehard. His name is Richard, but he runs this bar called Barcode in Los Angeles. I was just inviting a few friends I knew in the area that were *Street Fighter* related and so many *Street Fighter* people came out. It was absolutely insane." Jon describes his love of the game as being "90% the people" and says, "In our group in Pittsburgh, I always say we're not going to be the best, but we're always going to have the most fun."

When asked why they think the series remains such a competitive fixture, Capcom's developers come to a similar conclusion. "Put simply, the passion of the players," replies *Street Fighter 6* director Takayuki Nakayama. "The people who lived through the era of *Street Fighter II* being popular in arcades are now the ones who are reacting to and spreading the news of game and collab announcements, and helping to create a vibrant community." Kazuhiro Tsuchiya agrees. "I think this applies to all brands with a long history, but the developers are bringing a passion vision for the games which matches the intensity of the passion of the fans. Propelling the series forward with our shared love for it is what sets *Street Fighter* apart, I would say."

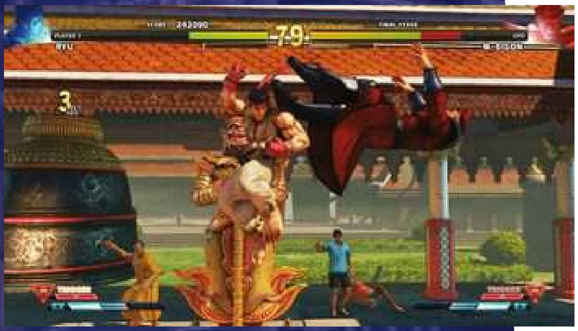
***Street Fighter* has also inspired many of our interviewees to enter the games industry themselves, and informed their work there.** "I've been buying *Street Fighter* art books since the Nineties, analysing all the illustrations. When the home ports came out, I used to pause quickly to see all the animation frames in slow motion," says Joseph. "I did this for fun, but it became useful when I had to do combat animations for work. The biggest inspiration comes from the character's choreography, especially the anticipations for the moves and how they return to idle. *Street Fighter* never takes the easy path, they create complex and creative motions that flow in a very short amount of time. I challenge myself to create moves with that sort of enthusiasm and not settle for easy choreography."

"I was super obsessed with *Street Fighter* for seven years, *Street*

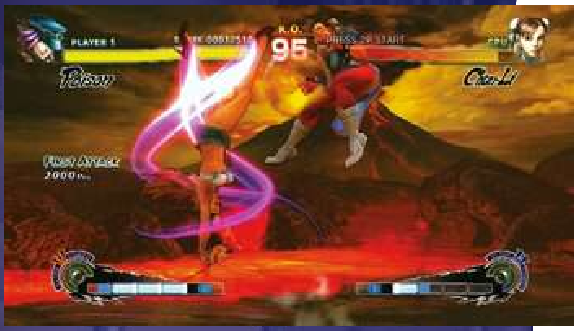
» The very American Jean-Claude Van Damme stars alongside the very British Kylie Minogue.

» Unexpected collaborations abound, as *Street Fighter* characters become *Magic: The Gathering* cards.

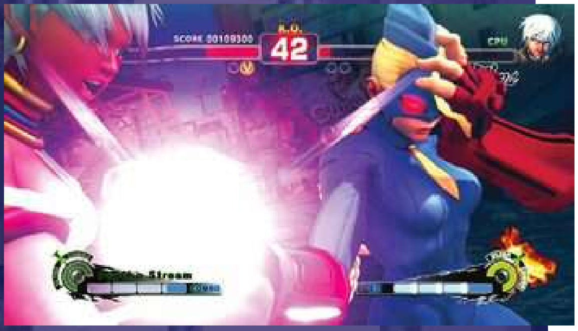
STREET FIGHTER x SANRIO
SERIES 1 6" PLUSH
» When Hello Kitty dresses as M Bison, does she become evil or is she just pretending?



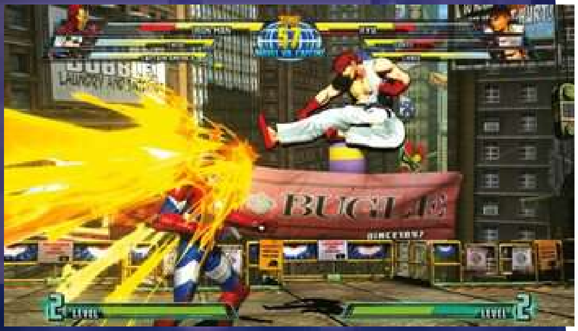
» [PS4] Callbacks to popular past settings have been utilised ever since the *Alpha* series.



» [PS3] The *Street Fighter IV* series was well-received and buoyed the entire fighting game business.



» [PS3] The expressiveness of the characters in *Street Fighter* games is always fun to see.



» [PS3] Even as the Marvel Cinematic Universe launched, Ryu could be found beating up Iron Man.

> "WHEN I GOT MY FIRST JOB AT CAPCOM, IT JUST SORT OF BECAME THE BACKGROUND OF OUR ENTIRE LIVES"
>
> IAN SLUTZ

▶ *Fighter IV* specifically," says Geoff. "And if I didn't hold on to that love for so long, then I wouldn't have been able to branch out to other games and be able to work on fantastic titles such as *Divekick*, *Killer Instinct*, even non-typical fighters like *Override*." Ian found that the game was embedded into the culture while working on the *Maximo* games. "When I got my first job at Capcom, it just sort of became the background of our entire lives. You start a build, you play a round of *Street Fighter*, you close down a bug, you play a round of *Street Fighter*."

The series inspires plenty of fan work too, as you can see from the Alternate Costumes boxout. Then you have efforts like Steven's blog, the fan research that inspired it and the stories that result from that love for the characters. "I started writing fan fiction for myself when I was 14, and that led me to a deeper understanding of the characters and how they'd react in certain situations," says Steven. "Fortunately, I didn't have to rely solely on head canon for very long because of someone on GameFAQs who went by the name Tiamat. His plot guide, for years, was the gold standard for finding out about *Street Fighter* lore. It was well-researched and really dug deep into the game's story, even going so far as to translate from the original Japanese. These days, I prefer to use Fandom and official sources for my research, but everyone who's into *Street Fighter* lore started with Tiamat, myself included."

It's that love for the game's cast that really shines through, even with our competitively inclined interviewees, and while the *Street Fighter II* cast is most beloved by the wider public there is plenty of love for the later introductions, particularly Rose, Karin and Rufus. "My current favourite is the Korean razor blade herself, Juri. Since her debut in *Super Street Fighter IV*, I've been fascinated by her manic personality, wild visual design, and unique play style. She's got her hooks into me," says Chris. "As a competitive player, I find myself proud of 'representing' my character. When I fight, it's like I'm taking 'my' Juri into battle, equipped with the skills I've spent hours practising. That player passion definitely expresses itself through gameplay, and the audience can feel it, and thrive off of it."

With *Street Fighter* being so ingrained into pop culture, it's not hard to imagine that the series could endure for another 35 years. What would that look like? "We'll probably be on *Street Fighter 12* by then," says Nakayama with a laugh. "I have no idea what that would look like, so I suppose the best I can hope for is that people are still enjoying the series by then!" Matsumoto chimes in, also laughing. "I was thinking the same thing – 35 years got us to *6*, so I hope we make it to *12* in another 35! I'll do my best to keep this a series that people love, even 35 years from now." Matt adds his own take. "I can barely even fathom where *Street Fighter* will be by the time I'm in my 70s. From 1987 to 2022, you can still perform a Hadoken with a quarter-circle motion and a button press. Will the same be true of *Street Fighter 12* in 2057? I hope it'll still be an option. But even if *Street Fighter* evolves into something that goes beyond the core mechanics – the punch-tapping electricity and chargeable flash kicks that have been its calling card since *Street Fighter II* – there will still be a dedicated community that plays the classic titles."

Matt goes on to outline a vision of the future. "In 35 years' time, *Street Fighter V Champion Edition* and *Street Fighter 6* will be in similar place to where *Super Turbo* and *3rd Strike* are now. They'll be retro games that introduced many players to the fighting game community, and I suspect they'll still be played alongside future generations of *Street Fighter* titles. Some fans may stick with *Street Fighter 8* for a specific character while others may organise yearly *Street Fighter 10* tournaments for the love of a core mechanic. That's the beauty of the *Street Fighter* series. It means many different things to many different people. I hope that never changes." We get the feeling that as long as Ryu and the gang can cross over with anything and never feel like second fiddle, it never will change. ✱

» We love the attention to detail of making the *Monopoly* money into Bison Dollars.

» Starry Marie made her impressive Sakura costume herself.

» AEW wrestlers Matt Jackson, Kenny Omega and Nick Jackson (L-R) in their *Street Fighter* attire.

» Rob Zwetsloot looks great as M Bison's grey-haired *Street Fighter V* incarnation.

Photo credit: Alucard Photography

ALTERNATE COSTUMES

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO COSPLAY A STREET FIGHTER CHARACTER?

■ Cosplay is one of the many ways that fans express their love for *Street Fighter*, whether they're long-term fans or relative newcomers. "My first encounter with *Street Fighter* was probably in 2016 through some friends," says Starry Marie. "I honestly was drawn to Sakura because I see a lot of myself in her character! We look a bit alike, but aside from that she's outgoing, determined, free-spirited and kind-hearted." It's more than just fancy dress, as Starry made the costume herself. "At the time I was super new to sewing, so it was pretty difficult for me. I hadn't made very many cosplays myself, and had never made a seifuku or pleated skirt. It probably took me around 40 hours to make."

That high-level of effort is common. "This costume can take up to a month to make, depending on your free time, mainly because the armour pieces are custom made from thermoplastic that you shape and warp with heat then prime and paint over several sessions," says M Bison cosplayer Rob Zwetsloot, whose costume is the realisation of a long-held ambition. "I've always enjoyed a good hammy villain in fiction, and M Bison in the Nineties was a great example of this. From his ridiculous story in the *Alpha* games to Raul Julia's portrayal in the film, he quickly became a favourite. Throw in a good costume design and it became the thing I wanted to make for years."

There are plenty of famous faces who have donned the costumes of the iconic fighters too, with wrestlers and mixed martial arts fighters seeming particularly drawn to the series. At All Elite Wrestling's Fyter Fest event in 2019, Kenny Omega and the Young Bucks wore ring gear inspired by Akuma, Ryu and Ken, while their colleague Claudio Castagnoli made light of an eye injury in 2014 by comparing his new look to that of Sagat. MMA fighter Angela Hill drew plenty of attention when she showed up to weigh-ins dressed as Sagat and Dhalsim, and also wore a fantastic Elena costume for Comic Con. But it's not just people in combat sports that join in with the fun – Jamie Lee Curtis remained incognito at Evolution 2015 by hiding under the mask of Vega, and you can see Himari Tsukishiro of the Japanese heavy metal idol group Necronomidol dressed as Chun-Li, right.

» When she's not performing on stage, Necronomidol's Himari Tsukishiro enjoys cosplaying characters like Chun-Li.

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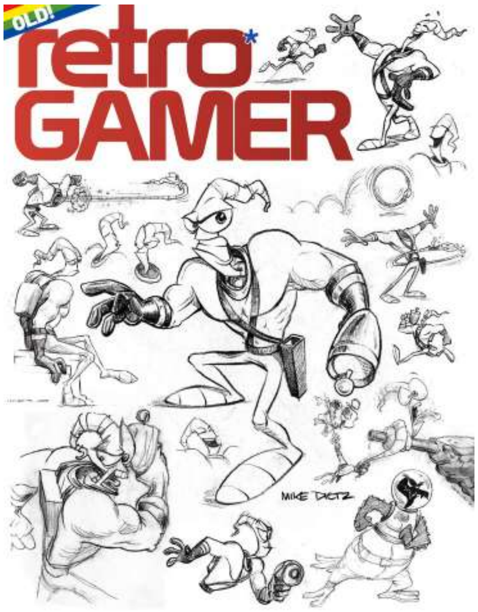
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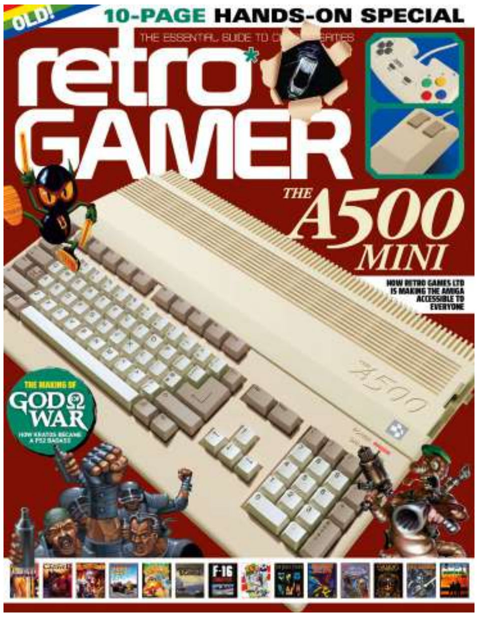
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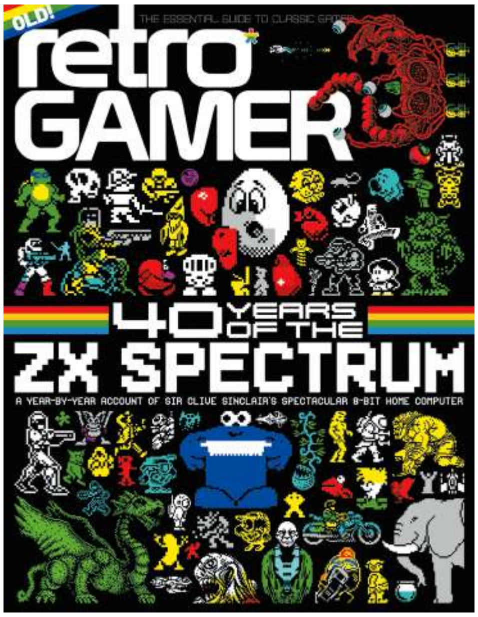
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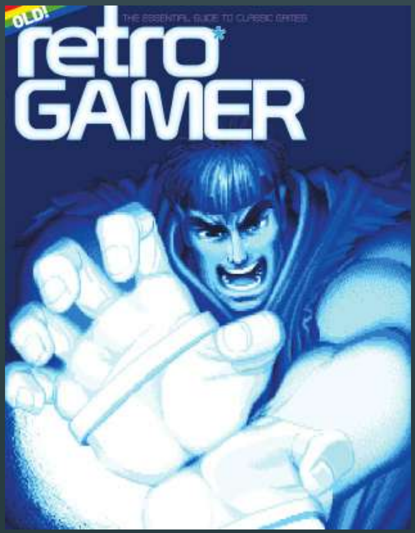		
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Hardware Heaven

Amstrad GX4000

» MANUFACTURER: Amstrad **» YEAR:** 1990
» COST: £99.99 (launch), £90+ (today, boxed), £65+ (today, unboxed)

During the Eighties, Amstrad established itself in the European gaming market thanks to its CPC range of computers, but by 1990 those machines were starting to look a bit long in the tooth. The 16-bit Amiga and Atari ST computers comfortably outperformed the CPC, and consoles were becoming increasingly popular. Amstrad's response was to introduce the enhanced Plus range of machines, which were CPC systems with enhanced video and audio capabilities, with the GX4000 introduced as the console configuration of this range.

Despite some positive early coverage and a distinctive design which resembles a snowspeeder from *Star Wars*, the GX4000 flopped immediately. The Master System and NES both had sizeable cartridge libraries by this point, which Amstrad's machine couldn't match – and without a tape deck, it couldn't leverage the CPC's existing library of cheap cassette games to tide players over. What's more, while the GX4000 was competitive with other 8-bit machines, it launched shortly before the 16-bit Mega Drive hit the European market, leaving it no technical advantage. The console was discontinued less than a year after its launch. *

Image by Evan Amos

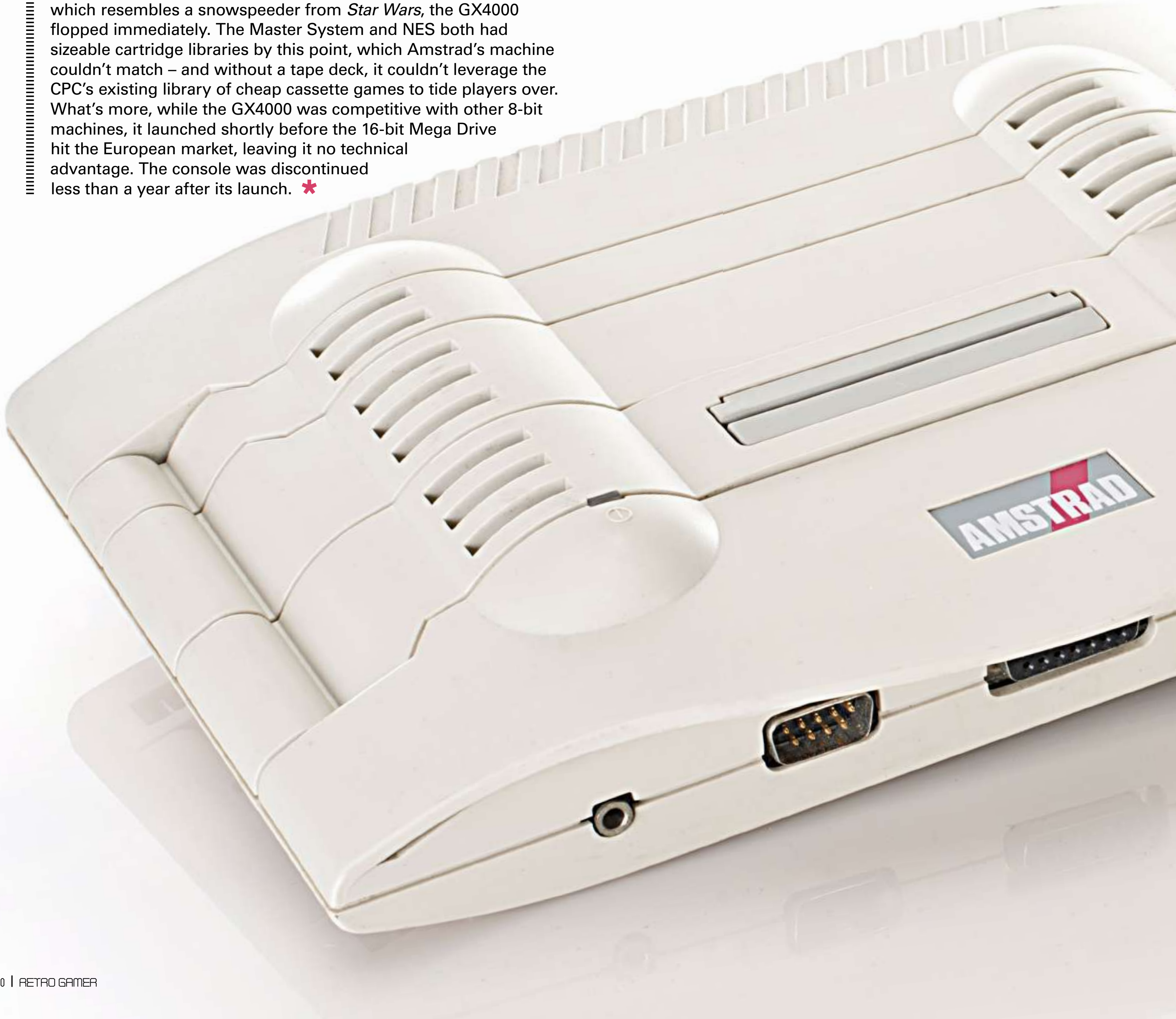
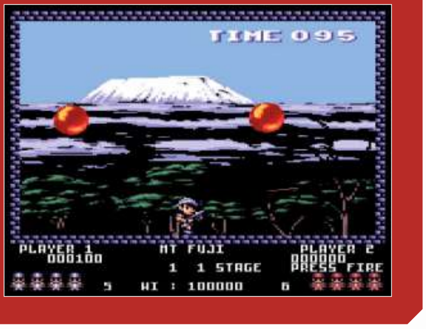


Image by Evan Amos

ESSENTIAL GAME

Pang

The GX4000 doesn't have a large library, with only a couple of dozen games to choose from, but it did have at least a couple of cracking games to its name. Though *RoboCop 2* deserves an honourable mention for being an exclusive, there's arguably nothing that plays better than this excellent arcade conversion. It looks about as faithful as you could have hoped for at the time, the music holds up pretty well, and the bubble-busting action is just as fun today as it was a few decades ago.



Amstrad GX4000 fact

■ The GX4000 is one of the easier consoles to hook up, thanks to its unusual use of a standard SCART socket for video output.

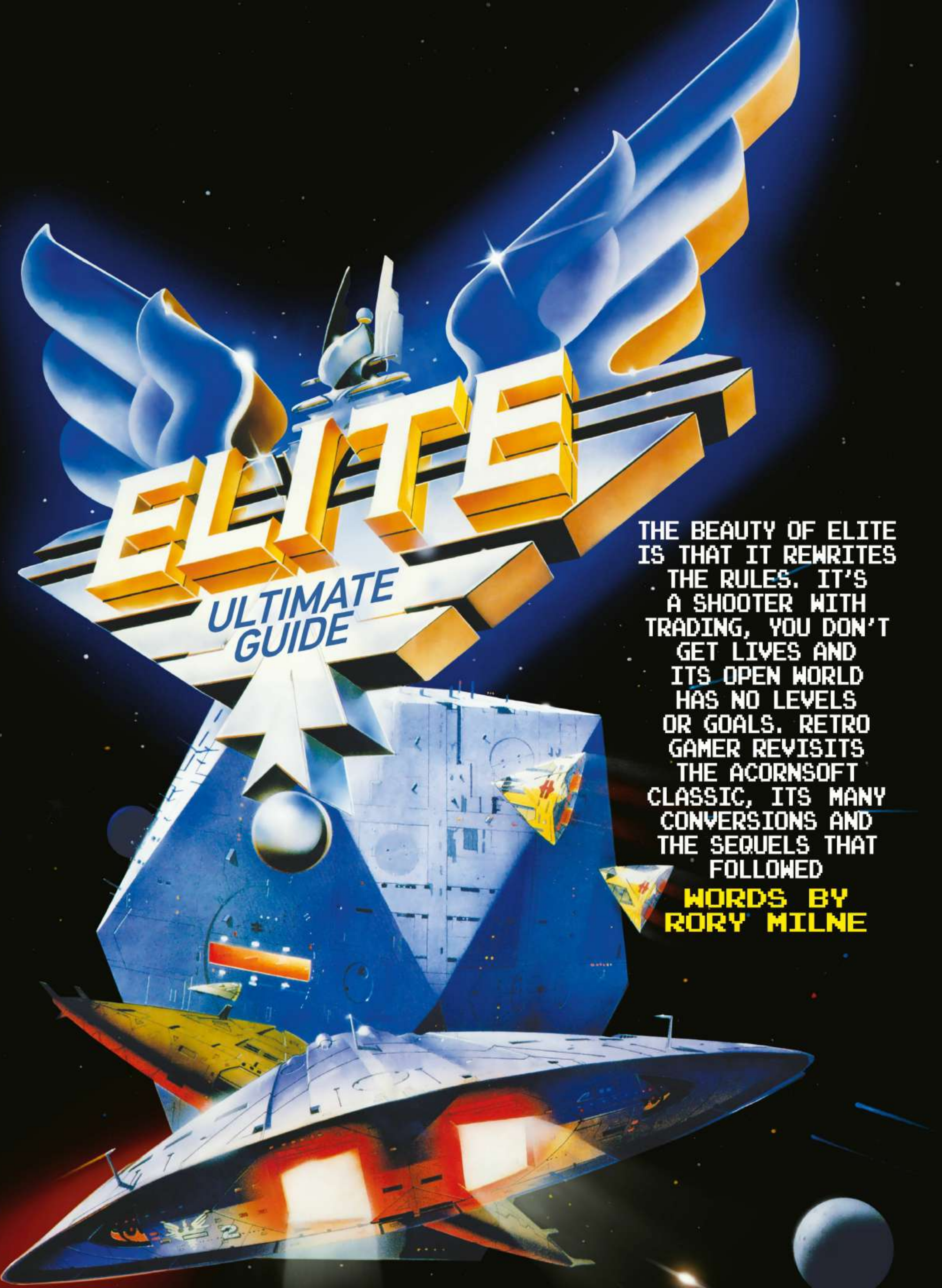
PROCESSOR: 8-BIT ZILOG Z80A CPU (4 MHZ)

GRAPHICS: CUSTOM ASIC ALLOWING HARDWARE SPRITES, SCROLLING (32 COLOURS ON SCREEN, 4096 AVAILABLE COLOURS, 160X200 RESOLUTION)

MEDIA: ROM CARTRIDGE (UP TO 512 KB)

AUDIO: GENERAL INSTRUMENTS AY-3-8912 (3 CHANNEL STEREO SOUND)

RAM: 64 KB

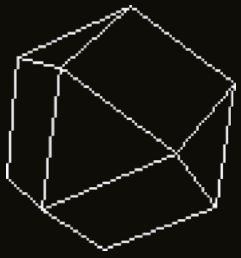


ELITE

ULTIMATE GUIDE

THE BEAUTY OF ELITE IS THAT IT REWRITES THE RULES. IT'S A SHOOTER WITH TRADING, YOU DON'T GET LIVES AND ITS OPEN WORLD HAS NO LEVELS OR GOALS. RETRO GAMER REVISITS THE ACORNSOFT CLASSIC, ITS MANY CONVERSIONS AND THE SEQUELS THAT FOLLOWED

WORDS BY RORY MILNE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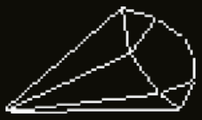
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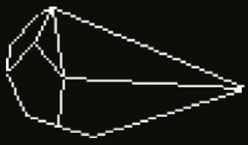
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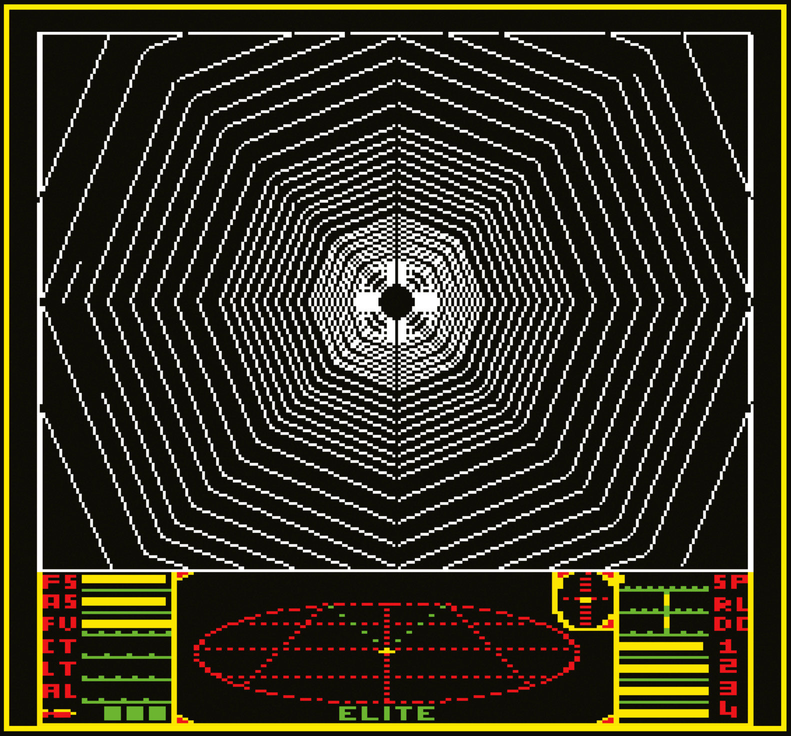
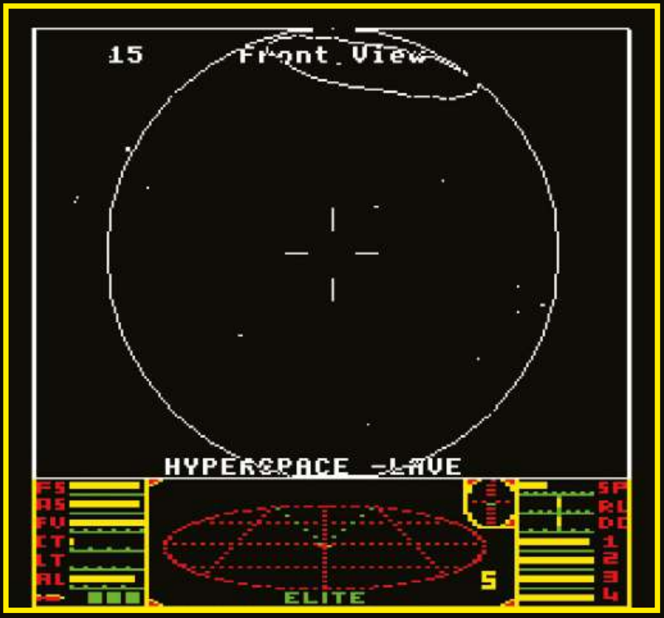


» [BBC Micro] Leaving the space stations in *Elite* looks cool and doesn't require any piloting skills.



» [BBC Micro] Journeys between *Elite*'s planets involve plotting a course and then jumping through hyperspace.

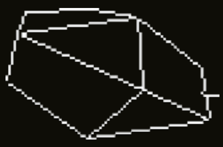
It's little wonder that *Elite* was a revelation on its release in the autumn of 1984. Shoot-'em-ups tended to be simple pleasures, whereas Acornsoft's title incorporated trading and character development more associated with RPGs. Its open-world gameplay gave you the freedom to make your own decisions, instead of being goal-orientated and mission-based. Piloting its Cobra Mk III spacecraft felt more like running a flight simulator than playing a videogame, and perhaps most importantly, its universe was depicted in three dimensions rather than two, using wireframe vector graphics in place of sprites or bitmaps.

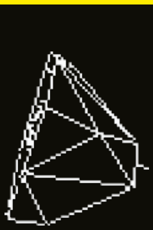
But was *Elite* entirely original? Well yes and no. It certainly presented certain concepts in new ways, but at the same time those ideas had first appeared elsewhere. *Elite*'s 3D space faring and planetary trading seemed unique, but the university-based PLATO network game *Spasim* had attempted the same feat in 1974, albeit much less convincingly. *Elite*'s combat mechanics weren't completely fresh either, in that they weren't a million miles from those in the 1979 Atari 8-bit title *Star Raiders*. It's ironic, then, that two tabletop RPGs were cited as the main influences on *Elite*'s design, more specifically, Ian Bell was playing 1977's *Traveller* prior to making the space epic while David Braben was playing 1980's *Space Opera*.

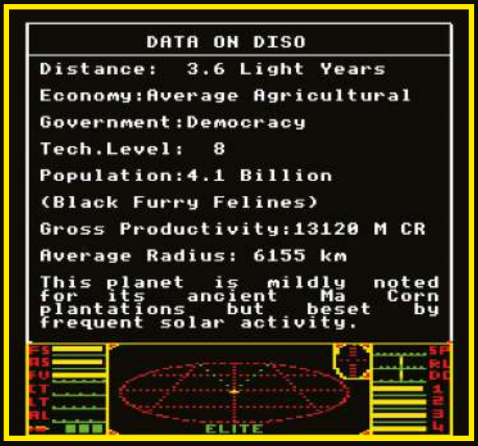
> "WE HAD TO DO IT FROM SCRATCH, BECAUSE BRABEN AND BELL WERE VERY, VERY PROTECTIVE"
> **RICARDO PINTO**

Regardless of its origins, *Elite* provided a form of immersive experience that other games simply couldn't offer. This was partly down to its sheer scale, in that it presented players with hundreds of planets that they could hyperspace jump to, but the fact it favoured realism over ease of use was another factor. At the time, videogames would often leave upgrades just lying around for the taking, but in *Elite* if you wanted to enhance your ship you had to raise funds to buy parts. Once suitably equipped, your craft would allow you to make money as a bounty hunter or military contractor, or to steal what you needed as a pirate. But since you started the game with ineffective weapons and limited add-ons you had no option but to begin by purchasing goods that were plentiful on one planet to sell on another where they were scarce. This all seemed like hard work, of course, but it came with a sense of accomplishment.

Equally challenging were the mechanics associated with reaching planets. Braben and Bell had always envisaged *Elite* as a combat game with trading, with the travelling salesperson aspect of its gameplay there only to give its dogfights depth and meaning. So much so that the ▶


ASP MK II


COBRA MK III



```
DATA ON DISO
Distance:   3.6 Light Years
Economy:Average Agricultural
Government:Democracy
Tech.Level:   8
Population:4.1 Billion
(Black Furry Felines)
Gross Productivity:13120 M CR
Average Radius:  6155 km
This planet is mildly noted
for its ancient Ma Corn
plantations but beset by
frequent solar activity.
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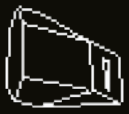
» [BBC Micro] The key to trading is researching the economic and political climates of *Elite*'s planets.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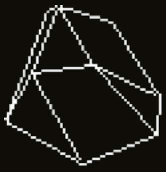
COBRA MK I

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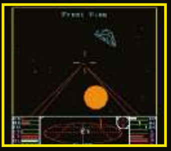
CONVERSION CAPERS

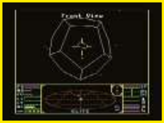
THE PROS AND CONS OF THE MANY DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF ELITE

BBC



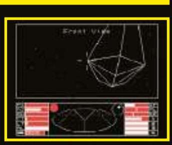
■ Of the original Acornsoft releases, the BBC disk version is the best. It has 18 ships to the tape edition's six and the Acorn Electron variant's five. It also has military lasers and secret missions. The BBC Master iteration came out two years later, and is faster and more colourful.

C64



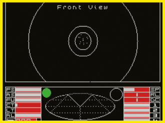
■ As with the Acorn versions, the C64 *Elite* was developed by David Braben and Ian Bell, although it was released by Firebird not Acornsoft. As well as being slightly more colourful than its BBC Micro counterparts, the C64 adaptation plays *The Blue Danube* when using the docking computer.

TATUNG EINSTEIN



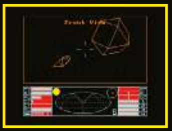
■ An accurate port of the Spectrum version, the Tatung Einstein *Elite* was adapted and sold by Einstein stalwarts Merlin Software. It lacks some of the Sinclair *Elite*'s visual effects, like when you destroy ships they disappear instead of exploding, but it does have better sound effects.

ZX SPECTRUM



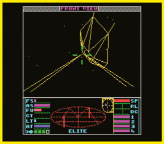
■ Less colourful than the C64 conversion, and lacking docking music, the Spectrum *Elite* compensates with nicer looking animations when you leave a space station or jump through hyperspace. It also includes three secret missions that don't feature in either the C64 or Acorn iterations.

AMSTRAD CPC



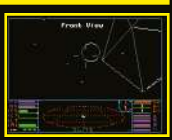
■ Like the Spectrum *Elite*, the Amstrad port was produced by Torus, and it plays identically if slightly slower. Where the Amstrad adaptation improves on its Sinclair counterpart is with its rendering of the action in multiple colours. It also has a pre-game rendition of *The Blue Danube*.

MSX



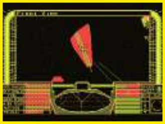
■ Rob Nicholson's MSX *Elite* is one of the most colourful 8-bit versions, and like the Amstrad iteration it plays *The Blue Danube* pre-game. The disk release is the one to play, as it has the original game's two missions plus the three from the Spectrum *Elite* – it also has two new ships.

APPLE II



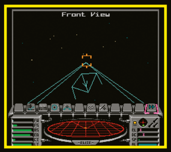
■ A solo effort by Ian Bell, the gameplay in the Apple II *Elite* is depicted in the four distinct hues of the system's unique colour palette. Unlike its Acorn inspiration, the Apple II version is flicker free, and like the C64 *Elite* it gives you pesky aliens called Trumbles to deal with.

PC



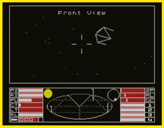
■ Created by Realtime Games' founder Andy Onions, the PC *Elite* has pros and cons. Its big advantage over the original is that it has filled vector visuals in place of wireframe ones, but on the downside it runs in four-colour CGA mode – and its chip tune *The Blue Danube* is an acquired taste!

NES



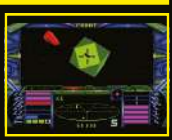
■ Credited to Braben and Bell, the NES *Elite* is the latter's favourite published version of the game. Considered impossible because of the NES's sprite-based hardware, this adaptation nonetheless manages vectors with ease, and gets around the lack of keyboard with an icon-based system.

SAM COUPÉ



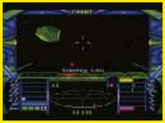
■ Even if the SAM Coupé *Elite* is technically a conversion, it wasn't the conversion owners of the system were hoping for. It's really just the Spectrum *Elite* running in an emulator, with the only notable additions being a new loading screen and the option to save your progress to disk.

AMIGA



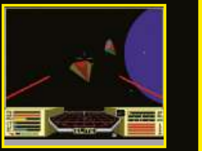
■ Like the MSX *Elite*, the Amiga version was made by Rob Nicholson. It plays much like the original, but in terms of aesthetics it betters it in every area. Its most obvious improvements are its illustrated trading screens, multicoloured filled-vector visuals and superior sound effects.

ATARI ST

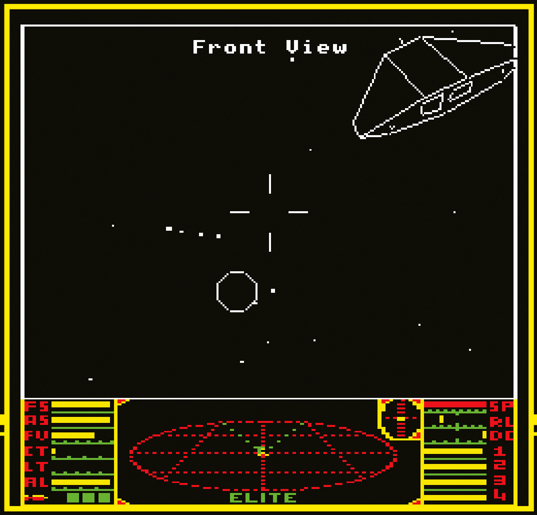


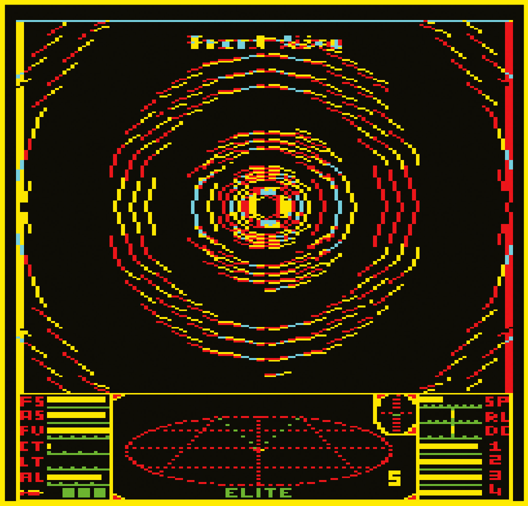
■ The third of Rob Nicholson's *Elites* is visually identical to its Amiga counterpart, although its title music and in-game sounds aren't nearly as good. The enemy ships only fire ammo at close range in both 16-bit versions, which makes them far less challenging games than the original.

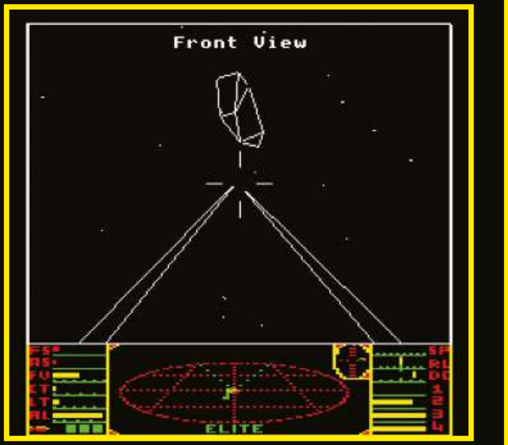
ARCHIMEDES



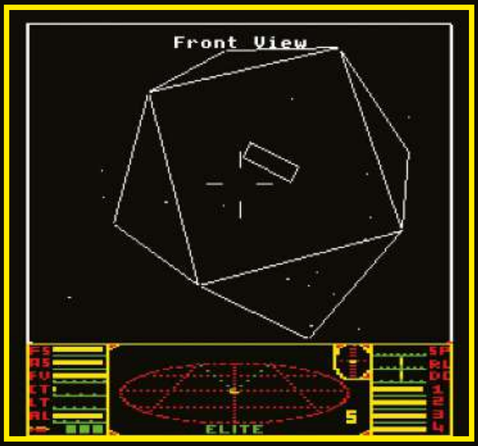
■ While retaining the gameplay established by the original, Warren Burch and Clive Gringras's Archimedes *Elite* boasts many enhancements. As well as a graphical UI and filled vectors in-game, it has more ship types and factions, each with unique behaviours – some even battle each other.



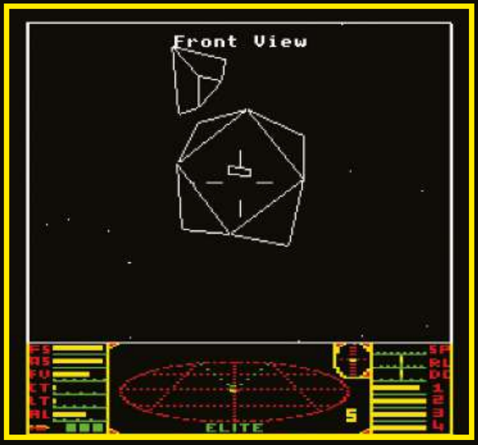




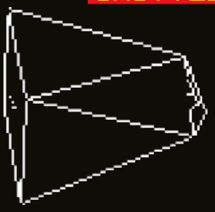
» [BBC Micro] The routes to planets with anarchic governments are plagued by pirates who don't take prisoners.

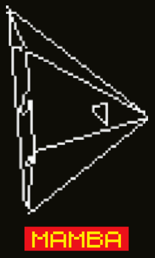


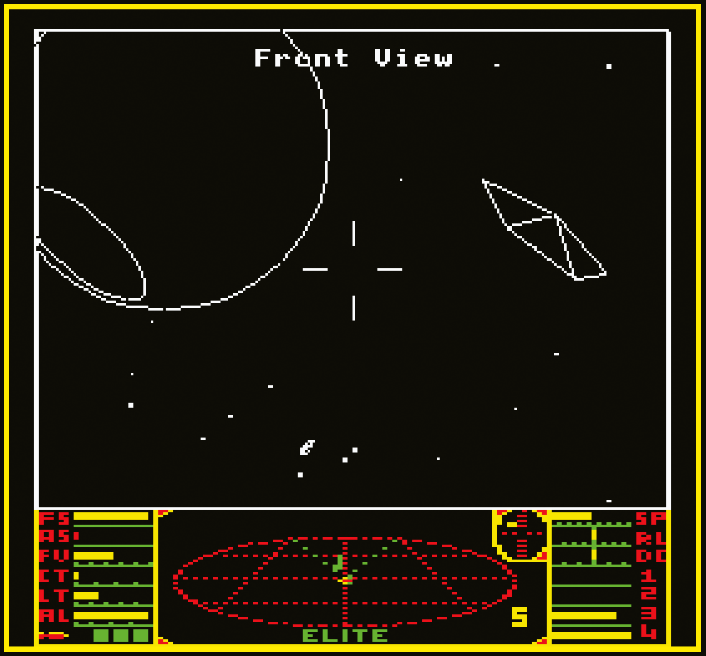
» [BBC Micro] Docking with the space stations is a challenging but necessary skill to learn in *Elite*.



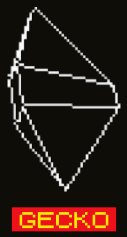
» [BBC Micro] If you break too many laws in *Elite* you can expect to be pursued by the police.







» [BBC Micro] You begin *Elite* with ineffective weapons, so avoid conflict until you can afford to upgrade them.



DODECAHEDRAL STATION

game's only set goal was to improve your ranking by racking up kills. In order to facilitate this, hyperspace jumps between star systems landed players halfway between the planet they needed to visit and its sun, therefore creating a long enough journey to make firefights with hostile ships an inevitability.

> "WE WERE TRYING TO CREATE SOMETHING THAT LOOKED LIKE THE ORIGINAL GAME, EVEN THOUGH THERE WAS A MORE NATURAL WAY TO DO THINGS ON THE Z80"
> **RICARDO PINTO**

Making these battles more difficult was the fact that *Elite*'s flight mechanics had more in common with flying an aircraft than playing a shoot-'em-up, in so much as your Cobra Mk III dived, climbed, rotated clockwise and rotated counter-clockwise instead of moving directly up, down, left and right. All of which took some getting used to. Then there were *Elite*'s geometric trading stations, which spun around in space close to their host worlds, providing only the narrowest of docking portals for pilots to navigate their ships into.

In short, *Elite* was anything but straightforward, and yet its novel challenge seemed to increase its appeal, although it should be pointed out that it didn't initially sell in its millions. Without taking anything away from the system that *Elite* was designed for, the far from inexpensive BBC Micro was found in more classrooms than homes. The end result being that many first experienced *Elite* while crowded around a school computer between classes, although this then sparked demand for it to be adapted for more popular machines.

During the Eighties, buying the rights to convert a game from one home computer to another was typically a straightforward affair, but *Elite* was another matter. It was reportedly the first videogame to have its conversion rights sold off in an auction, which involved firms submitting sealed envelopes containing their best offer. Firebird won the Z80 rights after pledging 'a substantial sum' of money, and soon outsourced the Spectrum and Amstrad adaptations to Torus Software. Firebird also snapped up the distribution rights to versions for 6502 systems like the C64 and Apple II, with Braben and Bell on porting duty.

Much excitement in the games press followed, but despite the best intentions of those involved, *Elite*'s arrival on some of these micros took longer than expected. But by early 1986 all four systems had their own iteration, which resulted in impressive sales across the systems. *Elite* then made its way to the Tatung Einstein, MSX and PC the following year, with the DOS game being the first version to feature filled-vector graphics. Around this time, Braben and Bell scrapped their plans to develop an 8-bit sequel, but the *Elite* conversions kept coming. Between the late-Eighties and early Nineties, their game was adapted and enhanced for the Atari ST, Amiga, Archimedes, NES and for VGA-equipped PCs under the name *Elite Plus*. ▶

PYTHON

DEVELOPER Q&A

RICARDO PINTO ON CONVERTING ELITE TO THE SPECTRUM AND AMSTRAD

How did Torus get the job of converting *Elite* to the Spectrum and Amstrad?
The main reason was that we had the technical chops to actually be able to do it. *Gyron* was a 3D vector graphic game, and we explained that we were going to use the technology we had developed for making its big circles to do *Elite*'s moons. So we got the job because Firebird believed we could do it.

What sort of art and code assets did you get from the BBC Micro original?
We had to do it from scratch, because Braben and Bell were very, very protective. They must have given us the 'seed' system they used to generate the planetary systems, because there was no way we could have done that. But they didn't give us any help with the way the ships were built – we just had to copy those off the screen.

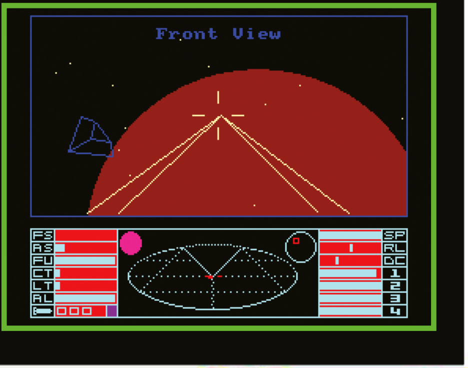
How did it compare to making an original game like *Gyron*?
Elite was massively more frustrating, because we were trying to create something that looked like the original game, even though there was a more natural way to do things on the Z80, which would have been slightly different. But we had to go that extra length to make it look like the original because that was being insisted on.

Why did you devise original missions for the conversions?
Because we wanted something of ourselves in them. In fact, there was quite a lot of original stuff that we put in to improve various things. I have a feeling that I redesigned the in-game display that showed where ships were relative to yours. So we improved on their design to make ours more functional.

How did you make sure your missions complemented *Elite*'s open world?
I would say that the two things didn't contradict each other, because all that happened was that a mission was triggered when someone went to a particular location. So I think the missions were just bolt-ons to the open world, where you went into a little annex and then came back out.

How were things towards the end of developing the Spectrum *Elite*?
I wouldn't let one of my mate's wives in, because I was protecting the work we had done! But we got some friends to have a look at it that didn't really know about computer games. We showed them it, and half of them couldn't even tell what they were seeing – it just looked like a few lines moving around the screen to them.

Were there any more set backs before it came out?
Just when it was about to be released we discovered this crash bug, and we were pulling our hair out. It turned out to be a bug in one of our circle drawing routines. We worked out that all of the screen dumps we had for these crashes had a planet in this particular position. So we burrowed down, found the bug and Firebird released it.



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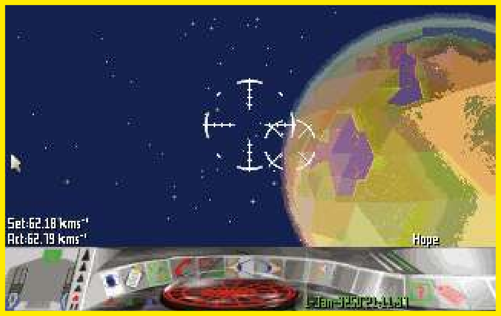
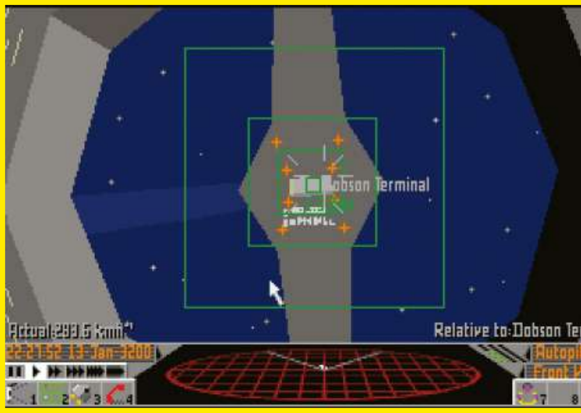
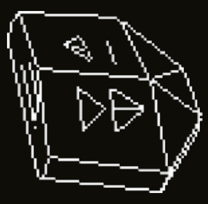


▶ Given the scope for releasing *Elite* on ever more systems, it's understandable that it took almost ten years for a sequel to materialise, another factor was that it took five years to develop. *Frontier: Elite II* finally appeared on the Atari ST, Amiga and PC, with flight mechanics based on Newtonian physics, detailed space station interiors and autopilot-assisted docking as standard. The much anticipated follow-up also introduced real-time interplanetary travel, with the option to effectively accelerate time to make journeys seem shorter.

For reasons too complicated and controversial to go into, *Elite*'s subsequent sequel *Frontier: First Encounters* was developed without Ian Bell's involvement. Fresh gameplay elements included the ability to land on planets, and a focus on undertaking profitable missions and entering events with prize money – such as a race across the stars. As *First Encounters* was designed for the PC, the 1995 follow-up could take advantage of graphics hardware advances made since *Elite II*, and as a result its visuals were a big improvement over its predecessor's.

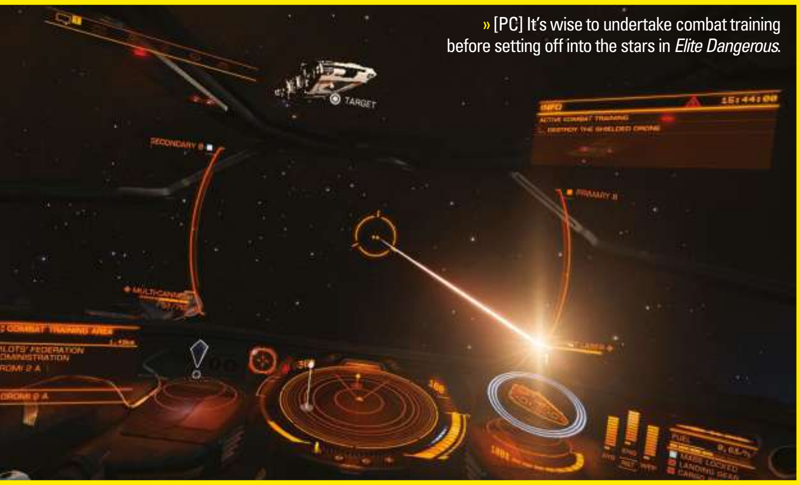


» [Amiga] Unlike in *Elite*, you get autopilot docking by default in its sequel *Frontier: Elite II*.

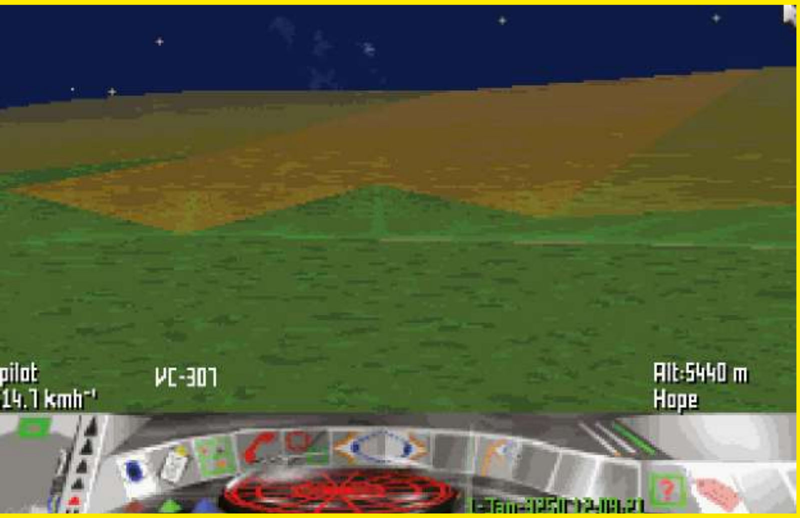


TRANSPORTER

THARGOID



» [PC] It's wise to undertake combat training before setting off into the stars in *Elite Dangerous*.

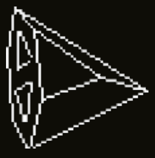


» [PC] A major innovation in *Frontier: First Encounters* is the ability to land on planets.

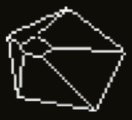
> "JUST WHEN IT WAS ABOUT TO BE RELEASED WE DISCOVERED THIS CRASH BUG, AND WE WERE PULLING OUR HAIR OUT"
>
> **RICARDO PINTO**

Although commercially successful, *First Encounters* seemingly marked the end of the road for the *Elite* series. At least that was the assumption until 2012, when David Braben's company Frontier Developments announced a Kickstarter for a new instalment for modern PCs. Following further funding, the suitably named *Elite Dangerous* was released in 2014 – 30 years after *Elite* had come out, with the biggest addition to the original's gameplay being its focus on online multiplayer. Mac, Xbox One and PS4 versions followed, and regular updates to the PC original continue to introduce exciting new features and storyline elements.

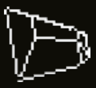
Of course, in terms of aesthetics, Acornsoft's *Elite* pales in comparison to the rich visuals of *Elite Dangerous*, but the original's immersive gameplay still holds up. Be in no doubt that you should expect a very steep learning curve, but that's fair given the satisfaction you'll gain from mastering the arts of trading, piloting and interplanetary combat, and from rising up the ranks to the heady heights of *Elite*. ★



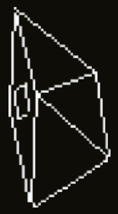
VIPER POLICE SHIP



THARGON



WORM LANDING CRAFT



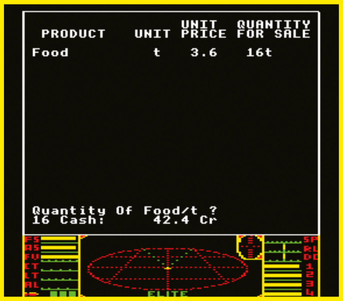
SIDEWINDER

ELITE ESSENTIALS

HOW TO RISE UP THE RANKS IN THE GROUNDBREAKING 8-BIT CLASSIC

ASTUTE TRADING

The trick to trading is to sell high-tech goods on agricultural planets for a premium while buying their low-cost food, which you sell on industrial planets for a profit while buying their cheap tech. Of course, you also need credits to pay for the fuel used to travel between worlds.

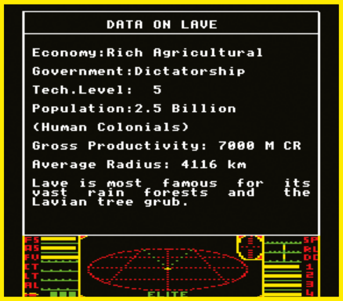


```
                      UNIT  QUANTITY
 PRODUCT        UNIT PRICE  FOR SALE
Food              t   3.6    16t

Quantity Of Food/t ?
16 Cash:         42.4 Cr
```

JUDGING JOURNEYS

The decline of the Galactic Government has left a patchwork of widely differing political climates. The safest planets are corporate states – although profits here are slim, whereas the most dangerous are anarchies – where you can make a small fortune if you aren't killed by pirates.

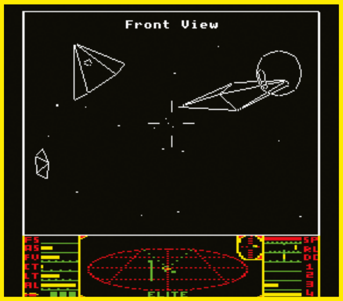


```
DATA ON LAVE

Economy:Rich Agricultural
Government:Dictatorship
Tech.Level:  5
Population:2.5 Billion
(Human Colonials)
Gross Productivity: 7000 M CR
Average Radius: 4116 km
Lave is most  famous  for  its
vast  rain  forests  and   the
Lavian tree grub.
```

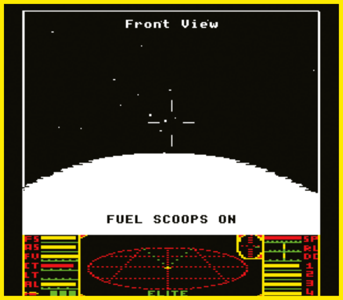
CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES

There are pros and cons to dogfights. On the one hand, confirmed kills raise your rank, which is a core objective. But on the other hand, you start the game with ineffective weaponry and limited energy, and aside from pirates, most ships will leave you alone if you don't attack them.



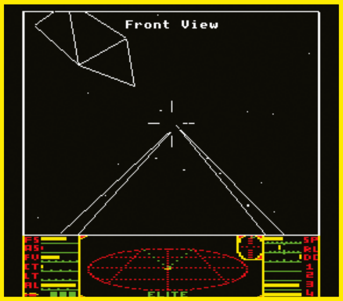
USEFUL UPGRADES

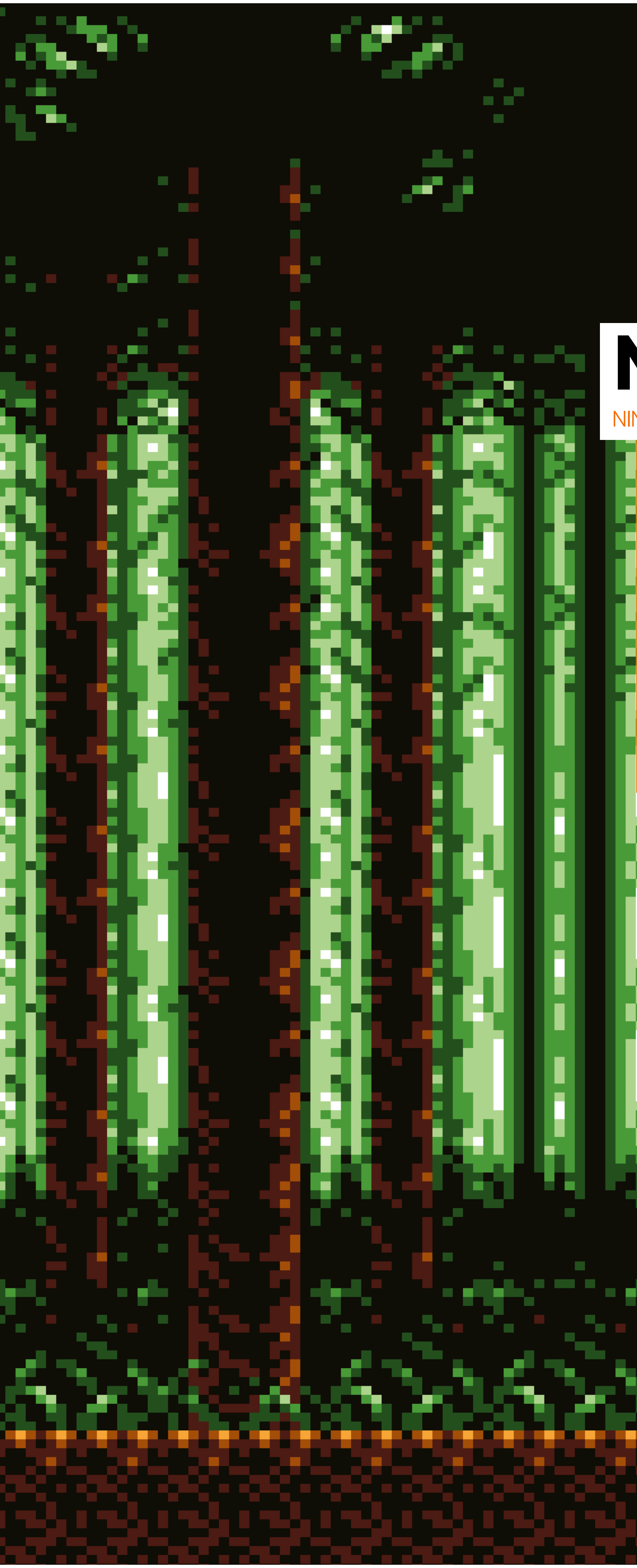
The capabilities of the Cobra Mk III craft that you pilot are initially quite modest, but there are numerous upgrades you can make – providing you earn enough credits. As well as extra energy banks and spare missiles, desirable purchases include a cargo bay extension and a beam laser.



KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Depending on your vessel's upgrades and how capable an opponent is, the different ships you encounter may be easy or near impossible to take out. Each craft is worth just one kill – no matter if it's feeble or all-powerful – so make sure that you weigh up the risk that each one poses.





Ninja Gaiden

NINJA TUNE

» MASTER SYSTEM » 1992 » SIMS

The Master System often receives unfavourable comparisons to the NES for its sound capabilities, and despite my love for the console, it's hard to disagree. The system hosts its fair share of duff soundtracks, and even the FM synthesiser in the Japanese console doesn't always help – for every brilliant *R-Type*, there's a surprisingly duff *Out Run*. Of course, if you've ever heard Yuzo Koshiro's soundtrack for *Sonic The Hedgehog* or the excellent work Matt Furniss did on *Lemmings*, you'll know that the right people can make the Master System sing. But if I'm trying to sway the unconvinced, I don't boot up either of those games – I instinctively reach for *Ninja Gaiden*.

The Master System version of *Ninja Gaiden* is a really good game all round, with SIMS tweaking the formula of the NES games to create a whole new adventure for Ryu Hayabusa. The first stage sees him fleeing through a dense forest filled with deadly spikes, as enemy ninjas try to finish him off to exterminate his clan for good. The whole thing plays to one of the best pieces of music for any opening level ever – seriously, go seek it out now, the name you're looking for is *Escape In A Forest*. It's an absolutely perfect fit, matching the pace of the game's fast action and providing a suitably dramatic accompaniment to Ryu's desperate escape from his destroyed village.

Takashi Horiguchi's work throughout the game is of a high standard, but it never does quite manage to top that initial tune. Of course, if you're anything like me you'll frequently start the game just to hear it, only to find that you're already hooked for a long session by the time that first stage ends. It's always worth carrying on though, because even when it pulls the classic *Ninja Gaiden* trick of placing evil birds right next to bottomless pits, the action in the game never disappoints. *

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COLLECT
THE OLIVER TWINS

THE retro GAMER GUIDE TO Code Masters BUDGET GAMES

THE CODEMASTERS LOGO WAS INSTANTLY RECOGNISABLE AND FOR MANY GAMERS IT WAS A BADGE OF REASSURANCE. JOIN US AS WE REVISIT 40 OF ITS 130-ODD RELEASES THAT HELPED CODEMASTERS CORNER THE BUDGET-GAMES MARKET MORE THAN 30 YEARS AGO

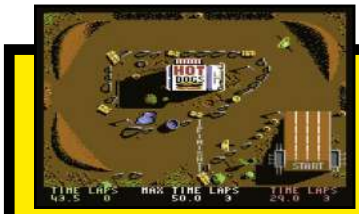
WORDS BY DAVID CROOKES

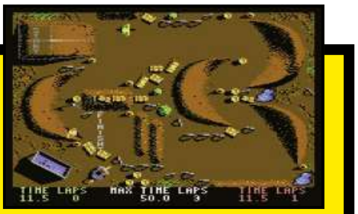
Codemasters dominated the budget-games market from the mid-Eighties to the early Nineties. Founded by brothers Richard and David Darling, with the assistance of father, Jim, the company released many memorable titles – chief among them a wide range of 'simulators' and the *Dizzy* series which was created by one of the Codies' key developers, the Oliver twins.

It was easy to see their appeal. The games' bold inlays were packed with screenshots and quotes, sometimes carrying gushing praise from David Darling himself ("absolutely brilliant" became a catchphrase). They were also based on popular themes, mostly real-life sport and striking characters. And, for the most part, they were great fun.

What's more, they were cheap. As well as typically retailing for less than £3, at least in the earlier years, the Codies also bundled many of its games into inexpensive *Quattro* compilations. The publisher even experimented with putting a bunch of games on to a single compact disc: the *Codemasters CD Games Pack*!

Although the company eventually moved into the full-price market and innovated with the likes of the Game Genie, the budget-mindset stood it well, creating a company which still exists to this day. Here we look at some of Codemasters' most interesting games; titles worth collecting for one reason or another.

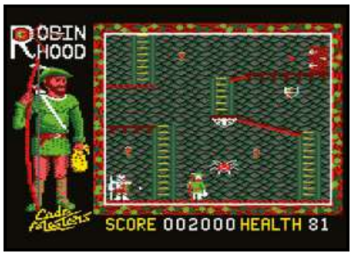


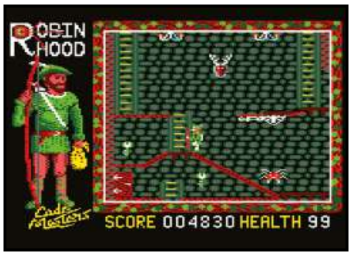


BMX SIMULATOR 1986

RICHARD DARLING

■ Having developed *BMX Racers* for Mastertronic, Richard and David Darling made *BMX Simulator* their debut Codemasters game. Often compared to *Super Sprint* thanks to its overhead view, this £1.99 title had two bikers racing against each other across seven single-screen tracks strewn with obstacles – with success relying on getting to know each course well. Sales reached 100,000 copies in its first year.

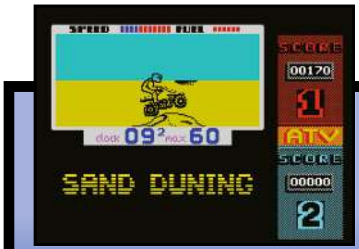


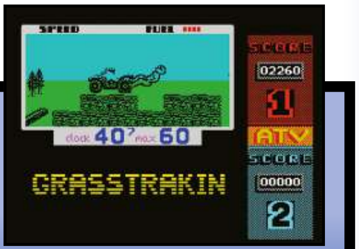


SUPER ROBIN HOOD 1986

THE OLIVER TWINS

■ The Oliver twins' planned their wonderfully animated platformer on a single A4 sheet of paper and that proved more than enough for the Darlings to snap it up. Instantly familiar, the game allowed players to take control of the 12th century Nottingham outlaw on a mission to rescue Maid Marian from the Sheriff. This involved collecting hearts, using keys to activate lifts and firing arrows at enemies. Standard platform fare, for sure, but a classic budget game nonetheless. It was later ported to the NES.





ATV SIMULATOR 1987

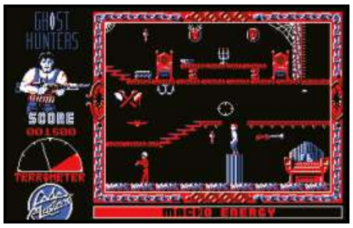
DIGITAL PERSUASION

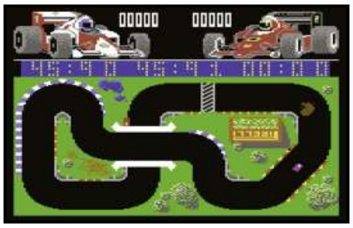
■ Slowly but surely, Codemasters began to make a name for itself with a range of simulators. Not only were they drawn from real life, they sometimes reflected the experiences of the Darlings, too – in this case, a love of motorsport. With *ATV Simulator*, the action was viewed side-on and allowed two players to race via a split screen. Many found the controls and gameplay a little too simple, though.

GHOST HUNTERS 1987

THE OLIVER TWINS

■ Bursting into life with a voice-synthesised rendition of "Ghost Hunters", this flick-screen frightener made great use of code created for *Super Robin Hood*. It also mixed platforming across 21 rooms with an *Operation Wolf*-style, cross-hair shooter – not only allowing players a neat way to fire ghouls in the ghoulies but creating a solid game that could be played alone or as a devilishly fun co-op experience.

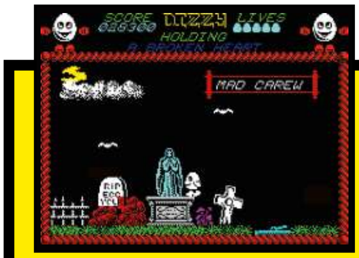


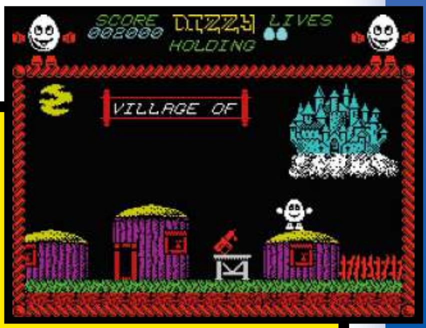


GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR 1987

THE OLIVER TWINS

■ It's perhaps a tad odd to see Formula 1 – that cacophony of sound welded with the sight of speeding cars and the smell of burning rubber – played out as tiny sprites skidding and spinning their way around 14 progressively difficult tracks but that's what was on offer here. A sequel, *Grand Prix Simulator 2*, would follow in 1989.





DIZZY 1987

THE OLIVER TWINS

■ Apparently David Darling wasn't too hot on *Dizzy* and he didn't think it would sell all that well but, as you'll no doubt know, the game spawned an egg-cellent franchise (and loads of bad puns). This debut only showed a glimmer of what was to come as the world of the Yolkfolk (and the number of items that could be carried at one time) expanded with several great sequels. ▶

DIZZY HEIGHTS

PHILIP OLIVER ON THE OLIVER TWINS' VAST CONTRIBUTION TO CODEMASTERS' BUDGET OFFERINGS

When you began working with Codemasters, it was a new company. What made you confident that this would be a good move?

We were 18 when we met the Darling brothers at ECTS in London in September 1986 and they appeared to be the same age as us with the same skills and passion for making games. The other people we dealt with at publishers were significantly older and never created games themselves. They were business people just trying to make money from those who could make games, often not paying those developers. Most were real cowboys exploiting young creative developers and this was what we most wanted to avoid. Richard and David were different in all the right ways and we really felt we could trust them. They had created many successful budget games for Mastertronic and wanted to copy the model but do it better.

What did the budget-game market allow you to do that the full-price market perhaps wouldn't have allowed?

There were massive expectations surrounding full-price games. They required detailed design plans, schedules and contracts. As teenage developers we just wanted to make games. Budget games had fewer expectations so we could simply make a game quickly without all the palaver and design them on the fly without having to justify or have anyone approve. Then we'd present it to publishers to see who would like to publish the finished game. It was our risk, but we were learning and improving all the time.

How long would you generally spend writing a budget game for Codemasters?

By the time we met Codemasters, we were very proficient developers and we knew we were capable of making games that would prove fun. But, to avoid too much risk and keep the momentum going, we always gave ourselves a maximum of one month to develop a game.

Why were a lot of Codemasters games based on recognisable mechanics or concepts, from Robin Hood and ghosts to simulators?

Just prior to meeting Codemasters, we realised that instantly recognisable and appealing titles were essential for sales. When looking at many games across several shelves in a shop, customers will only spend a second or so looking at each box. In that time, the title, cover and theme must be good enough to get them to stop, pick up the box and turn it over. Then you had the opportunity to add more details and screenshots and hopefully convert curiosity to a sale. Codemasters' art and design for their packaging were brilliant and definitely the best of all budget publishers at the time.

What impact did *Dizzy* have on the market when it released?

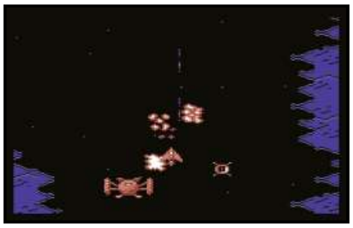
Well, *Dizzy* wasn't considered a key release for Codemasters because it didn't follow the formula of picking an already established popular theme. It only published *Dizzy* because it didn't want to upset us as our previous games were its biggest sellers and we'd presented them this as a finished game. Codemasters knew that if it refused to publish *Dizzy*, we would have taken it to other publishers and potentially be tempted away forever. It made a good call!

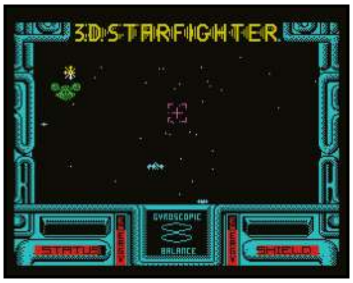
CARRYING
NOTHING.

LAZER FORCE 1987

GAVIN RAEBURN AND NIGEL FLETCHER

■ Developed as a Commodore 64 exclusive, *Lazer Force* was essentially a compilation of clones, evoking memories of *Salamander*, *Centipede*, *Moon Cresta* and *BMX Racers*. Thrown into a single game, they formed its four sections, each of which needed to be played eight times over, creating 32 levels in total. While it didn't quite stretch the C64 to its limits (contrary to the claims on the box), it still amounted to a frantically fun budget shooter.

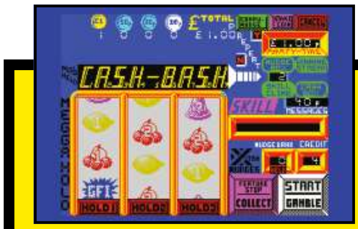


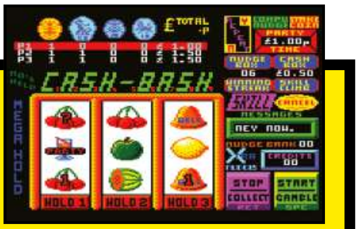


3D STARFIGHTER 1988

THE OLIVER TWINS

■ Apparently, according to the box blurb, this "latest epic" from the Olivers was "seen on TV" but on which programme it starred, we're not quite sure. We do know, however, that this 3D shoot-'em-up, in which players used crosshairs to blast at the enemy, was inspired by the vector arcade game *Tail Gunner* from 1979. It's a fun but limited little blaster.





FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR 1988

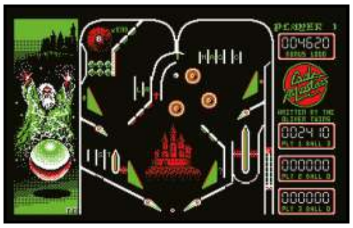
IN-HOUSE

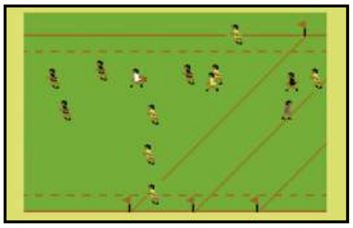
■ There may seem little point playing a fruity which doesn't cash out but this version had all of the flashy elements needed to hold your attention. Designed by James Wilson (and achieving a big fat zero in *Amstrad Action*), the game lets you insert virtual coins and gamble away, nudging the reels, amassing money in the Skill Climb and embarking on a Winning Streak (hopefully).

ADVANCED PINBALL SIMULATOR 1988

THE OLIVER TWINS

■ Rather than knock out a standard pinball sim, the Oliver twins included a *Dizzy*-like plot – something about a merciless wizard threatening to engulf a village in lava. Players needed to create a deadly potion using four flippers to knock the erratic ball into various obstacles before ringing a bell and finally saving the village.

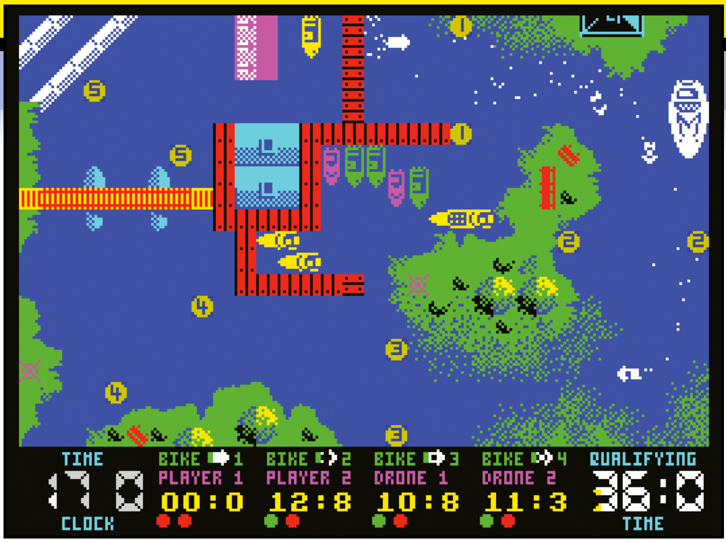




INTERNATIONAL RUGBY SIMULATOR 1988

TED CARRON

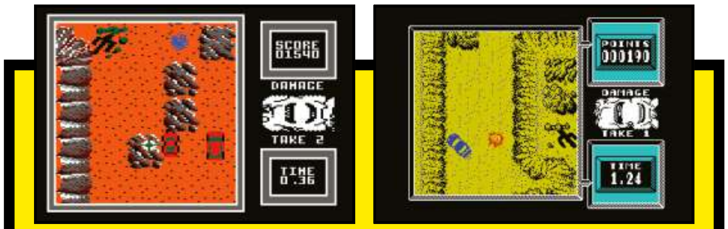
■ Codemasters let players compete in an eight-team league in this reasonable attempt at recreating the thrills and blood spills of rugby (albeit without any of the latter). Billed as the "first real simulation of the world-famous game", it may have moved a tad slowly from a side-on perspective but many elements of the sport were in there.


TIME
BIKE 1 PLAYER 1
BIKE 2 PLAYER 2
BIKE 3 DRONE 1
BIKE 4 DRONE 2
QUALIFYING
00:0
12:8
10:8
11:3
36:0
CLOCK
TIME

JET BIKE SIMULATOR 1988

THE OLIVER TWINS

■ What made this game interesting – aside from two-player races over 24 courses spread across the docks, coast and lakes – is that it formed part of a new Plus series which aimed to venture beyond the budget badge. In offering two versions of the same game (as well as a sticker and poster), the Codies hoped to justify a £4.99 price tag.


SCORE 01540
DAMAGE
TAKE 2
TIME 0.36
POINTS 000190
DAMAGE
TAKE 1
TIME 1.24

SUPER STUNTMAN 1988

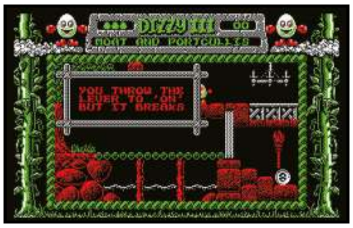
PETER WILLIAMSON

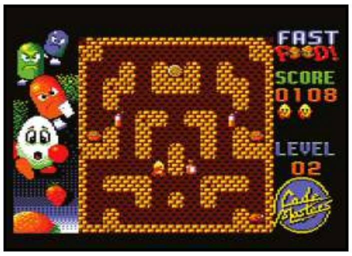
■ And, action! Two years after the *Fall Guy* television series came to an end, *Super Stuntman* arrived to embody the feel of classic Eighties movies. Players assumed the role of a film stuntman and took part in various heart-pounding box-office situations, whether that was racing through a desert, crashing cars, leaping over canyons or blasting away at boats. Tricky, but good fun.

FANTASY WORLD DIZZY 1989

THE OLIVER TWINS

■ *Treasure Island Dizzy* hit a problem on the final day of development. The Olivers discovered that dropping a snorkel underwater would cause Dizzy to repeatedly die so the answer was to grant players a single life – making the game frustratingly difficult. Thankfully, *Fantasy World Dizzy* suffered no such issues. Aside from introducing the Yolkfolk, this complex adventure packed a set of perfect puzzles across 50 screens. Its engaging plot was supplemented by the need to collect coins.

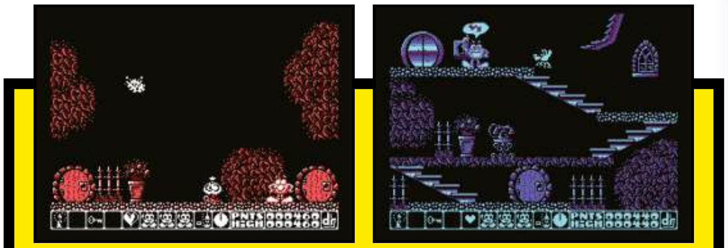

DIZZY III
YOU THROW THE LEVER TO 'ON' BUT IT BREAKS


FAST FOOD!
SCORE 0108
LEVEL 02

FAST FOOD 1989

THE OLIVER TWINS

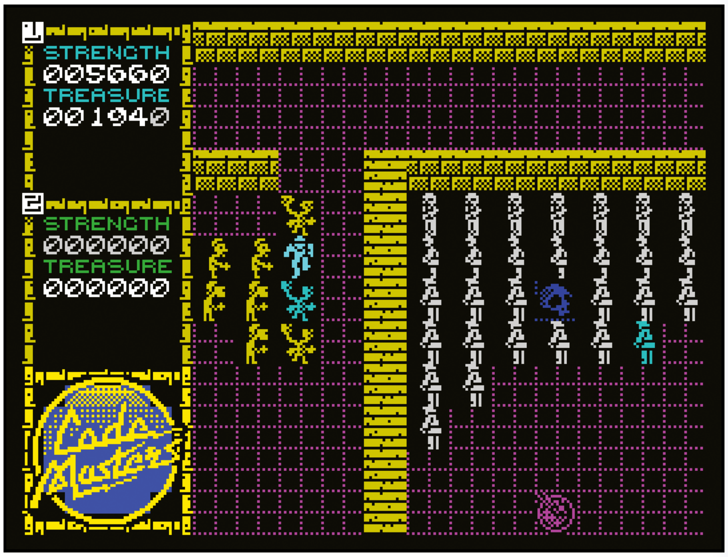
■ Originally intended to be a tie-in with the Happy Eater food chain, this fun maze game ended up starring Dizzy instead (although his name didn't appear in the title). In doing so, it marked the character's first time away from his adventure titles and showed how bankable Dizzy was becoming. By having to gobble various foodstuffs, there was an element of *Pac-Man* to the gameplay despite running at a slower pace. You can also find a version on Nintendo's Switch!



OLLI & LISSA 3: THE CANDLELIGHT ADVENTURE 1989

HARD & SOFTWARE

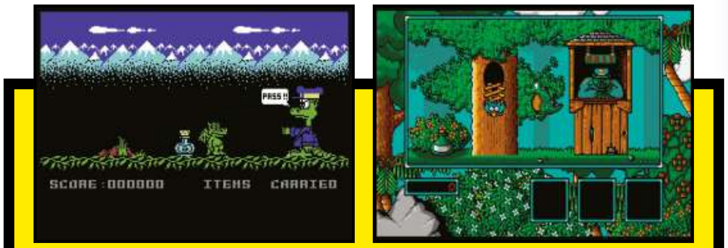
■ Codemasters saw a clear benefit in creating cute and cuddly characters so it created a budget label called Cartoon Time just for them. *Wizard Willy* was the first in the new series (and one to avoid), followed by *Olli & Lissa 3*, the third entry in the former Firebird/Silverbird franchise. The platformer had players helping Olli find stolen parts for his precious car.


STRENGTH
005660
TREASURE
001940
STRENGTH
000000
TREASURE
000000
Code Masters

NINJA MASSACRE 1989

TAG COMPUTER GAMES

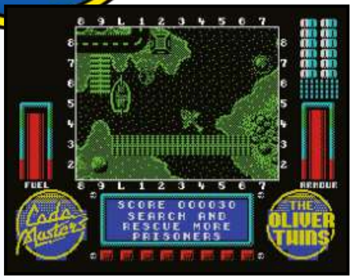
■ Obviously inspired by Atari's hack-and-slasher *Gauntlet*, this one or two-player top-down arcade game was designed by Adam Waring, better known for his work on *Amstrad Action* and *Your Sinclair*. With a blistering soundtrack by David Whittaker and 50 levels to go at, it was worth a blast, although it did have several flaws.

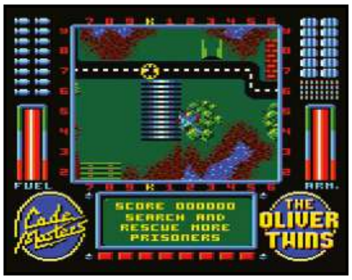

PASS!
SCORE:000000
ITEMS CARRIED

LITTLE PUFF IN DRAGONLAND 1989

CONSULT SOFTWARE

■ *Little Puff* was also released on the Cartoon Time label and it, too, was suitably cutesy. In order to appeal to kids, the main character – a fire-breathing dragon – didn't have enough power to kill. Instead, he had to leap over enemies while collecting items, solving well-considered puzzles and trying to find four pieces of a pass. It was all very *Dizzy*-esque and a fair bit of fun. ▶

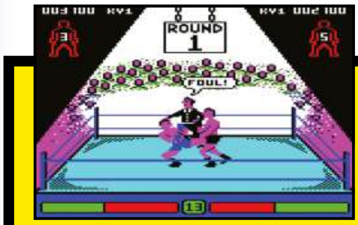

SCORE 000030 SEARCH AND RESCUE MORE PRISONERS

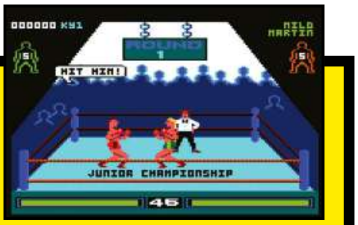

SCORE 000000 SEARCH AND RESCUE MORE PRISONERS

OPERATION GUNSHIP 1989

THE OLIVER TWINS

■ Inspired by the gunship helicopter scene from the movie *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, this slick, eight-way scrolling game was created as a sort of top-down viewed *Choplifter*. Players would fly missions over five enemy islands to pick up eight SAS Commandos, being careful not to run out of their limited supplies.





PRO BOXING SIMULATOR 1989

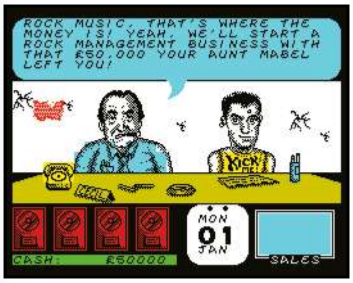
SUPERIOR SOFTWARE

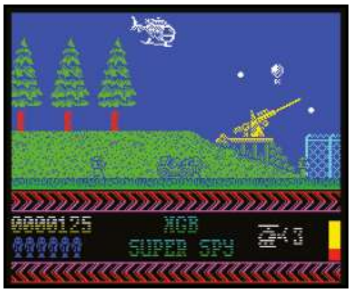
■ Far from being an original game, *Pro Boxing Simulator* was actually a re-release of Superior Software's *By Fair Means Or Foul*. Trouble is, Codemasters didn't make that clear at all and presented the game as a brand-spanking new release! The only difference between this and the ageing original was a new title screen and fresh packaging. Gamers were offered a refund and the packaging was made clearer.

ROCK STAR ATE MY HAMSTER 1989

COLIN JONES

■ When *Rock Star* was first released (with a warning that it contained potentially offensive material), it wasn't actually a budget game. Codemasters was trying its hand in the full-price market with a music management sim under a new Gold label – a short-lived affair that also included *4 Soccer Simulators*. Despite decent reviews, the rodent gobbler was given a budget re-release within months.

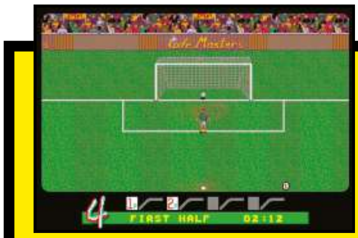

ROCK MUSIC, THAT'S WHERE THE MONEY IS! YEAH, WE'LL START A ROCK MANAGEMENT BUSINESS WITH THAT £50,000 YOUR AUNT MABEL LEFT YOU!

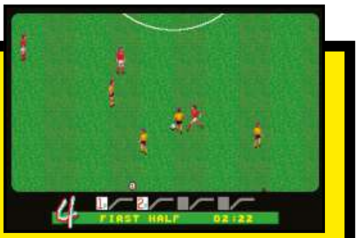


KGB SUPERSPY 1989

IN-HOUSE

■ Psst! *KGB Superspy* wasn't that great a game. But – get this! – it was written by an East German who had defected to the West according to the box blurb which apparently made it "completely authentic". In essence, it's a *Defender* clone in which players look to rescue scientists while picking up objects and avoiding enemy hits. Quite why this is done in a big chopper is anyone's guess, though!

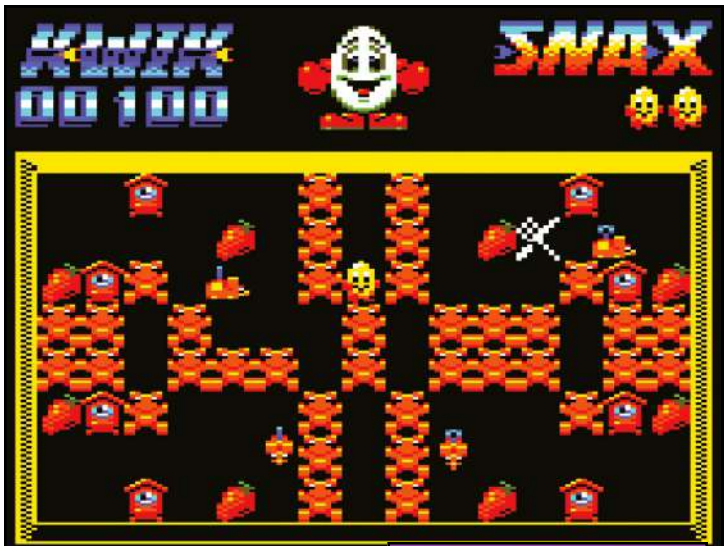


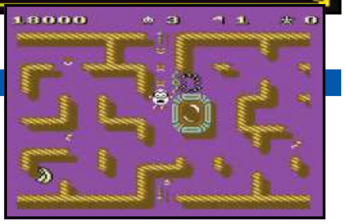


ITALIA 1990 1990

IN-HOUSE

■ As well as making budget games for the 8-bit home computers, Codemasters also released a fair few cheapies on the Amiga and Atari ST, with *Italia 1990* becoming an exclusive 16-bit title costing £4.99. Mid-table at best and glitchy, it was largely a half-cut repackage of *4 Soccer Simulators*. But it was a cheap enough to be a 'rival' to Anco's recently-released *Kick Off*.

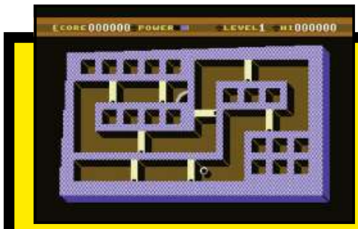


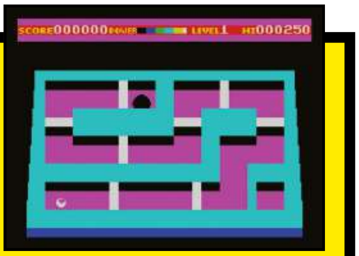


KWIK SNAX 1990

THE OLIVER TWINS

■ Another attempt at putting Dizzy in a non-adventure game, *Kwik Snax* took place across a series of single screens. Players would push blocks to trap or defeat enemies while trying to collect fruit – at least that was the case for all but the Commodore 64 version which was a completely different *Pac-Man*-style game!

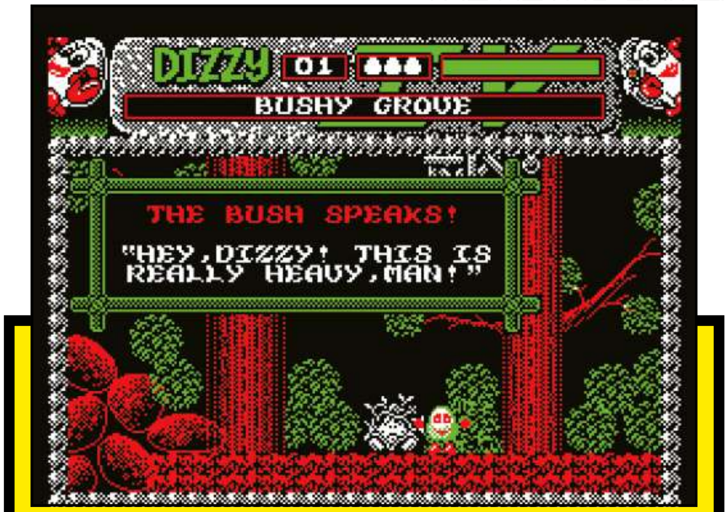




TILT 1990

IN-HOUSE

■ As if to prove that gameplay is more important than graphics, in came *Tilt* with its tremendously blocky set of four mazes that almost leapt from the screen. It got players to tilt each maze to allow a ball to roll around. Touch the sides or hit a gate and it was time to start over! As you can imagine, it was a frustrating and challenging affair.


DIZZY
01
BUSHY GROVE
THE BUSH SPEAKS!
"HEY,DIZZY! THIS IS REALLY HEAVY,MAN!"

MAGICLAND DIZZY 1991

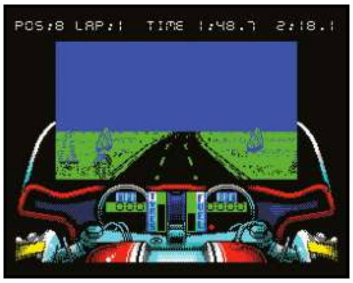
BIG RED SOFTWARE

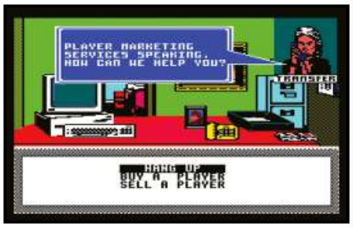
■ The Oliver twins designed *Magicland Dizzy* but since they were also creating *Fantastic Dizzy* for the NES, they passed the development baton to Big Red Software (creators of Codemasters' *Wacky Darts*). This enjoyable *Dizzy* sequel saw the return of the evil wizard Zaks who had imprisoned all the Yolkfolk, requiring Dizzy to save his cursed friends.

750CC GRAND PRIX 1991

WASP

■ There are two versions of this motorbike game: a 1989 CPC original by Ken Murfitt (aka Scope Soft) and this version by Lyndon Sharp for the Spectrum. Both made use of a third-person viewpoint but, for added realism, the Speccy version had the controls on a bike and, crucially, made the small playing screen tilt in the direction of a corner. An innovative little racer.


POS:8 LAP:1 TIME 1:48.7 2:18.1


PLAYER MARKETING SERVICES SPEAKING. HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?
TRANSFER
HANG UP
BUY A PLAYER
SELL A PLAYER

1ST DIVISION MANAGER 1991

NICK THOMPSON

■ Coded by Nick Thompson who also wrote Cult Games' *The Match* and *Soccer Rivals*, the Codies aimed to score with a soccer management game of its own. Its recreation of the manager's office worked well. But while the game was easy to pick up and play, the highlights were laughably bad and it lacked complexity.

CODING BACK THE YEARS

FORMER CODEMASTERS' BOSS DAVID DARLING REFLECTS ON THE COMPANY'S BUDGET BEGINNINGS

When you set up Codemasters in 1986 why did you aim for the budget-games market?
The intent behind Codemasters was to build fun, accessible games that could be bought by players on a budget. As much as the games on the market were interesting and fun, we felt that we could do far more with our games in a shorter development period. We wanted to concentrate on fewer games with have more emphasis on creative risk and experimentation.

Did you ever feel there was any stigma attached to budget games?
Regardless of any stigma around budget games, we wanted to focus on making enjoyable games. Magazines were a primary marketing tool for videogames, and full-price titles occupied the majority of the space in their pages. This made it more challenging for budget games to get a spot – we had to think differently about our strategy. We wanted to earn a player's trust. We drew people in through appealing screenshots, and strived to make the gameplay as fun as possible. This way, once we distributed the game to the right retailers, it would jump off the shelves at players and spread through word of mouth.

Which Codies' budget games stood out for you as being the most pioneering?
There were two things we focused on when we led Codemasters. We used popular themes at the time and innovated in ways that benefitted the player. *Professional BMX Simulator* was the first game to have four players simultaneously play together, as far as I'm aware, with two players playing on joysticks, and two sharing the keyboard.

What did budget games allow you to do that perhaps wouldn't have been possible with full-price releases?
Full-price games often had licensing tie-ins. So when you're responsible for the production of their game content, you often have to minimise risk to make games that sold really well and following standard guidelines was key. So you couldn't use licences to make something like *Rockstar Ate My Hamster* or other similarly out-of-the-box games back then. Exploring and making different, but attractive, experiences for players was a bonus of making budget games.

Codemasters did try full-price games on the home computers. How did it go?
When we wanted to explore higher prices, we largely sold compilations, collections, and packs of games. Over time, we increased our game prices from £1.99 to £2.99. Once we moved on to the 16-bit era we published videogames on Atari and Commodore Amiga systems and on CDs, we sold them for £4.99, largely because of the cost of the media itself.

Our *Dizzy*-themed game packs were sold for £9.99 per pack, with each pack containing five games. Although it's perceived to be a full-priced model, we were looking more at the entertainment value of these packs and collections. So our approach to selling games was still based on a budget-value mindset. We also sold *Quattro* Compilations, which were four-in-one packs with a theme such as *Quattro Arcade* or *Quattro Racing*.

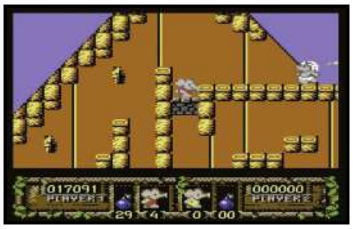
FOUR FIGHTERS!
CHOOSE YOUR STREETFIGHTER...Sexy Xena, Hi-IQ Ace, Stak the stealth fighter, or slender but deadly Zara. All different, all MEAN!! Use flame throwers, burst guns, pulse swords, teleports, jet boot thrusters and power-up weapons to TERMINATE the enemy.
INTERNATIONAL INSTRUCTIONS
MODE D'EMPLOI
INSTRUCCIONS
ACTUAL SPECTRUM SCREENSHOTS

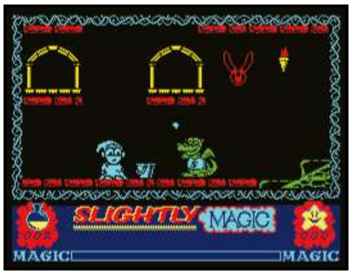
Did the budget-games market influence your approach to games at your current publisher, Kwalee?
My experience of 8-bit budget games has definitely influenced our approach at Kwalee, and also shaped the principles that have made us successful. Back then, we'd develop and release an 8-bit game and watch it hit the charts. The same thing now happens on mobile – with short development cycles and the satisfaction that comes from seeing the work of small teams pay off with happy players. This doesn't take away too much creativity and innovation – if anything, it encourages you to think about the fundamentals of game design. It's refreshing to see new ideas pop up in the charts most weeks.

CJ'S ELEPHANT ANTICS 1991

GENESIS SOFTWARE

■ Rather than have a heavy elephant plummet to the ground when stepping off a platform, the developers handed an umbrella to the anthropomorphic star of this game. It enabled CJ to gently float down, allowing players to control the character mid-air, before getting on with negotiating spikes, moving platforms, water and other assorted hazards. It spawned an equally worthwhile sequel, *CJ In The USA*.

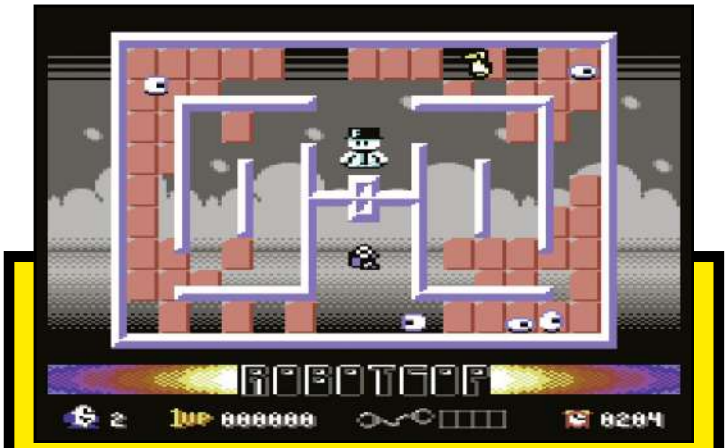




SLIGHTLY MAGIC 1991

ASTONISHING ANIMATIONS

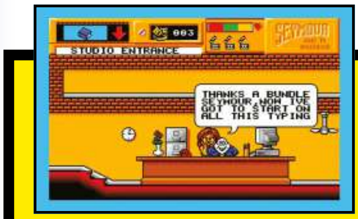
■ This was another interesting effort from Colin Jones, who had already developed *Rock Star Ate My Hamster* for Codemasters. This beautifully presented cartoon adventure in the style of the *Dizzy* series went further than simply letting players carry and use objects. In *Slightly Magic*, it was also possible to collect and create spells to get past hazards, and progressing required a lot of thought. Its huge size made a pre-internet 0898 helpline rather handy.

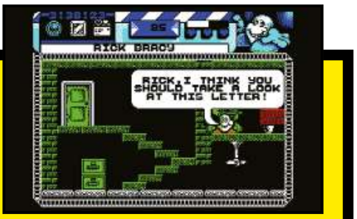


SERGEANT SEYMOUR: ROBOT COP 1992

BIG RED SOFTWARE

■ Seymour got a few spin-offs in his short lifespan but this was one of the best. Spread across 50 single screens and split into five zones, it was an immensely playable maze-like shoot-'em-up that, despite the name, was inspired more by the likes of *Parasol Stars*, *Tumblepop*, *Pang*, *Flicky* and *Rod-Land*. And yes, that is a police siren on his head.


003
STUDIO ENTRANCE
SEYMOUR
THANKS A BUNDLE SEYMOUR, NOW I'VE GOT TO START ON ALL THIS TYPING



SEYMOUR GOES TO HOLLYWOOD 1991

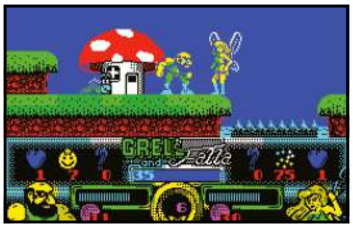
BIG RED SOFTWARE

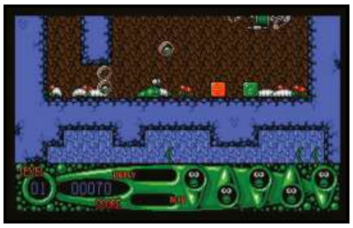
■ Paul Ranson, boss of Big Red Software, wanted to put Dizzy in Hollywood for the next game but the Olivers wanted to keep their character in pure fantasy worlds. Out went Dizzy and in came the potato-looking Seymour for more *Dizzy*-esque escapades. You could easily get lost in the maze-like studio lot.

GRELL & FELLA 1992

BIG RED SOFTWARE

■ This was very much the Big Red era and, in this side-viewed 2D platformer, it was clear why Codies used the studio time and again. Spread across 50 levels, a dwarf and fairy had to tend to a sorcerer's garden and complete a series of tasks. Both had different skills and players could switch between them.

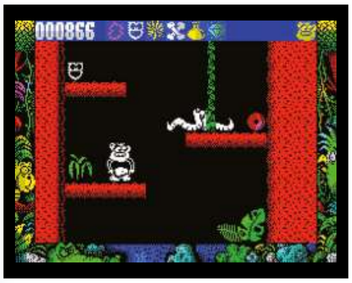


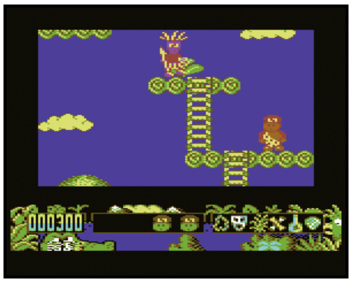


STEG THE SLUG 1992

BIG RED SOFTWARE

■ Another fab puzzler with platform elements, *Steg The Slug* went down a storm across all systems. Not only did Steg have a unique way of catching grubs – by blowing slime bubbles – he had to ensure they went towards a slug 'nest', ensuring he could feed his young. Cue lots of frantic dashing about.

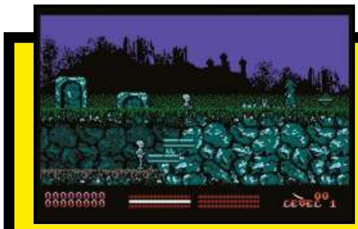


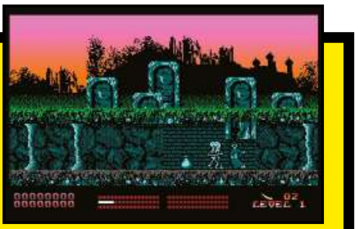


TARZAN GOES APE 1991

MARTYN HARTLEY

■ Contrary to the box art showing a human, Tarzan had actually been turned into a monkey for this game and it was the player's job to find the ingredients for a magic stew that would allow him to return to normal. It drew on the Codies' strength for making platformers and it had the ape-man moving vertically chucking coconuts at his enemies, with a few bonus levels thrown in for good measure.

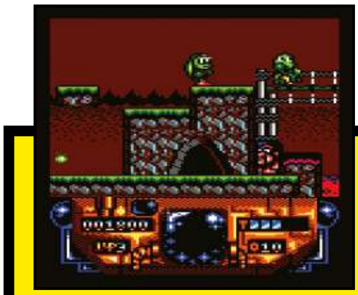


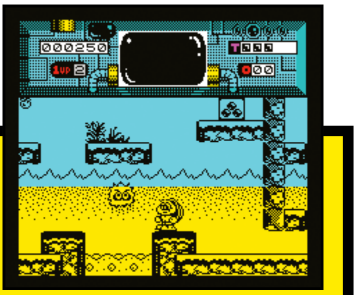


STRYKER IN THE CRYPTS OF TROJAN 1992

SIMMER SOFTWARE

■ Of the three versions – C64, Spectrum and Amstrad CPC – the latter was most notable. It used a similar engine to *Switchblade* but it also became the first commercial release to make use of the Amstrad Plus' extra features – features such as a palette of 4,096 colours that were supposed to be cart-only.





TURBO THE TORTOISE 1992

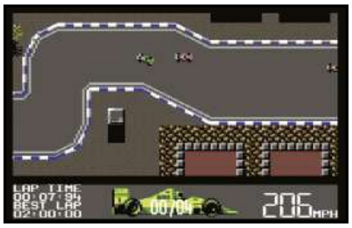
VISUAL IMPACT

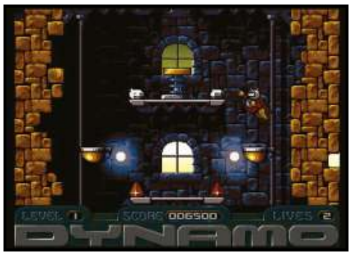
■ This game was actually released by Hi-Tec Software but we're including it here for two reasons: first, it was a great platformer thanks to six jam-packed levels spanning the ages and second, Codemasters re-released it when Hi-Tec closed, having sent only a few hundred copies to the shops.

SLICKS 1992

DIGITAL DESIGN

■ Codemasters wasn't afraid to return to winning formulas which, presumably, is why it released the C64-exclusive Formula 1 racer *Slicks*. It's not a million miles away from *Micro Machines* on the NES with its smooth, challenging tracks and fantastic two-player mode. The aim is to force the opposing human to scroll off the screen by speedily driving ahead.

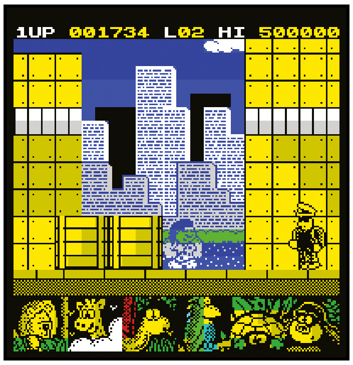


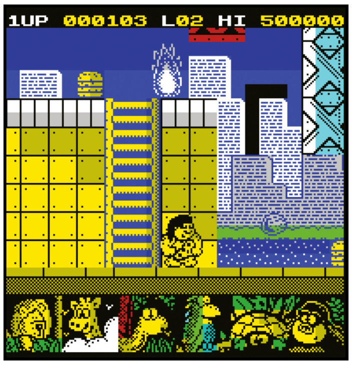


CAPTAIN DYNAMO 1992

IN-HOUSE

■ *Captain Dynamo* was a vertically scrolling platformer starring a retired superhero which required some well-timed moves (and a good head of hair given how much could end up being torn out!) Tricky puzzles made for a hardcore experience at times but the polish and care was to be admired. The 16-bit versions are the ones to go for.





BIG NOSE'S AMERICAN ADVENTURE 1992

IN-HOUSE

■ Let's just say, this adventure is not one to be sneezed at, putting a caveman in the midst of Manhattan and seeing how the 302-million-year-old fared when faced with a host of enemies. Supping beer reverses the controls – just one of the nice little additions which showed how much many devs cared about their games regardless of the price they were sold at.

CODERS UNITED

PETE RANSON WAS A GRAPHICS ARTIST AT BIG RED SOFTWARE

When you were working on budget games, what was in the back of your mind when creating them?
Quality was a factor. Well, for me at least. I always wanted to make good graphics and animate things well, while having good playability and interactivity and so on. Often, ambitions were frustrated by hardware limitations, and ideas for gameplay or features within a game were often held up by it being impossible to do simply because of the lack of processing power. But the thing in the back of my mind was always the game, whether it was fun or not – the 'look and feel' as I used to call it. We didn't always get it right, but that's generally what drove me.

Did the market for budget games allow for more creativity than the full-price market?
I don't think so. I believe the creative process is the same regardless of what the final price point is. We'd come up with an idea and wrestle with it until we could get it working. The only difference was perhaps down to time and how swiftly we could complete a title and get it published and, if the idea didn't work then it would be modified and adapted until it did.

In this sense, the iteration cycle on each game idea would have been reduced and I suppose that was one key difference – you had more time to iterate and flesh out ideas and concepts with full-priced games. So, on reflection, it made sense that some budget titles may have been released before they had 'matured' creatively. With hindsight, some of them should have been canned or left to mature and released at a higher price point but that wasn't how we did it back then – more often flying by the seat of our pants.

Why do you think Codemasters had a strong reputation and success?
I think it was a combination of factors: business-wise, creativity-wise, marketing-wise, collaboration and just being in the right place at the right time. Take Mastertronic, the budget pioneers. In my mind they were like old businessmen, doing businessy-type things, in grey suits, smoking cigars in back offices – it all felt very drab, downbeat and serious. Codemasters was very different in tone: family run, welcoming, young, dynamic, inclusive and fun. They still did businessy-type things – but it was done against a backdrop of the Olly twins, and the Darling bros or "the whizz kids" as the press called them.

Do you think the marketing of the games helped?
If you look at the box inlays from Codies – it was all "hey, wow" and exclamation marks. Bright, bold and irreverent. We had a lot of fun with those inlays, from silly quotes on the cover to jokey instructions. It must have appealed to kids with a few quid to burn and I think a great deal of that effervescence was down to Rich Eddy, (the ex-*Crash* editor who became Codies' marketing director), plus a close working relationship between the various in-house departments.

A lot of your work with Codemasters was character led. Why was this?
I suppose it was a bit of an obsession of mine at the time, I was very much inspired by Japanese arcade games, going back to titles like *Dig Dug*, *Donkey Kong* and (my absolute favourite) *Bomb Jack*, as well as more esoteric contemporary titles like *Tumblepop* and *Pang*, Then there was the *Rainbow Island* series, *Bubble Bobble*, *Parasol Stars* (a major influence) – they all were thematically similar, character-based, single-screen arcade games. As a result most games I designed had some form of protagonist that you 'played as' plus I was always experimenting with animations.

THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home

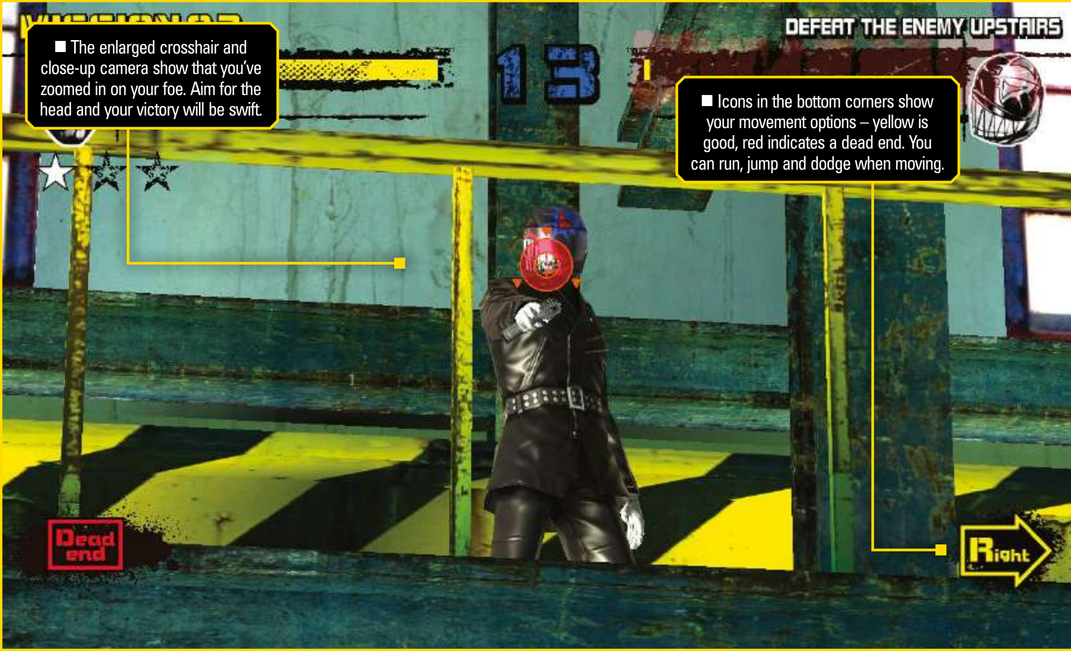
2 SPICY

DEVELOPER: **SEGA** YEAR: **2007** GENRE: **LIGHTGUN**

It's always been fun to partner up with a friend to take on terrorists, zombies or common criminals in lightgun games, but the opportunity to blow your buddies away is considerably rarer. *2 Spicy* (or *Too Spicy*) gives you the choice of six characters, each with a unique firearm and different attributes – for example, Ming Hua is fast and her dual pistols carry a lot of ammo, but her defence is low, while Laurence has high attack and defence but is slow and must reload his shotgun frequently. Once your character is chosen, you can take on a human player or the Story Mode, which is a succession of solo missions against CPU opponents with the odd bonus game thrown in.

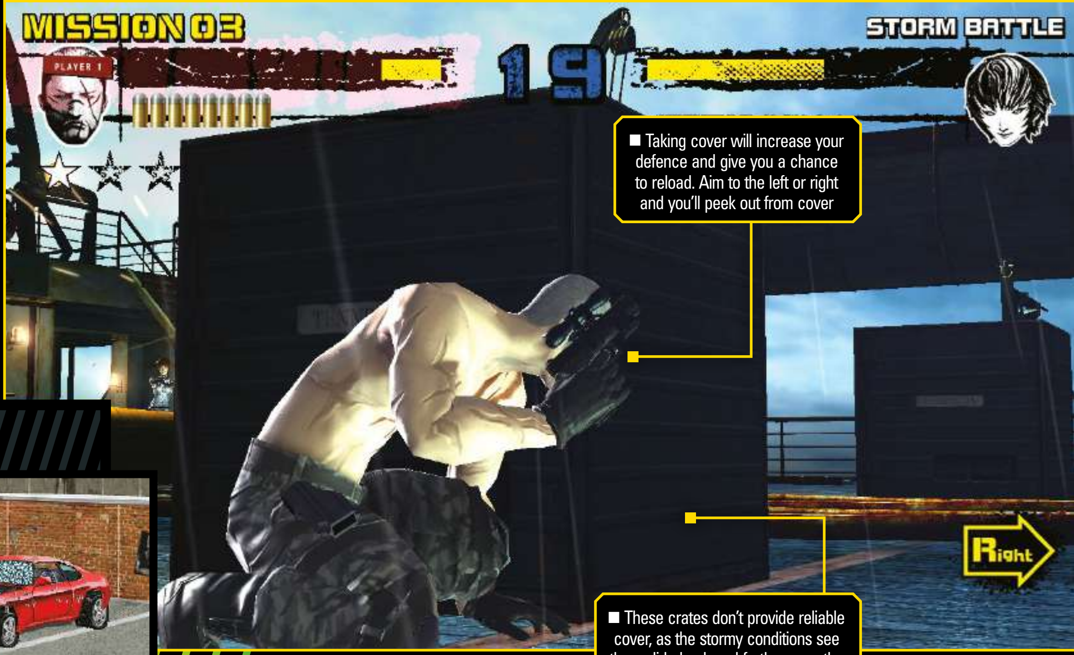
Two foot pedals allow you to run left and right, both to get a better aim at your opponent and to find cover from incoming fire, but your cover can be destroyed. That's not the only reason you'll be constantly running around, because training your gun sight on an opponent for long enough allows you to zoom in for more precise and powerful shots. If you manage to deliver a head shot while zoomed in, you can really punish your opponent. If your opponent has managed to zoom in on you, a flashing red border around the screen will warn you to take evasive action.

2 Spicy was never a prime choice for a home conversion, launching in a generation where flat panel TVs were rapidly making traditional home lightguns obsolete. Its fate was sealed when it flopped in arcades, because the dual cabinet was expensive for operators and players didn't really get the dual pedal system. If you ever get the chance to try this, it comes highly recommended – it's a brilliant game and a highly unusual one at that.



■ The enlarged crosshair and close-up camera show that you've zoomed in on your foe. Aim for the head and your victory will be swift.

■ Icons in the bottom corners show your movement options – yellow is good, red indicates a dead end. You can run, jump and dodge when moving.



■ Taking cover will increase your defence and give you a chance to reload. Aim to the left or right and you'll peek out from cover

■ These crates don't provide reliable cover, as the stormy conditions see them slide back and forth across the deck of the ship you're battling on.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

POINT BLANK

1994

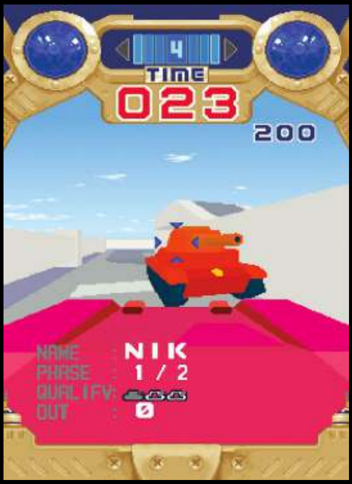
■ There has never been another game like *2 Spicy*, let alone one converted to home consoles. Namco's classic *Point Blank* is a totally different experience, but it does at least allow you to engage in competitive marksmanship on the PlayStation.

POLYGONET COMMANDERS

DEVELOPER: **KONAMI** YEAR: **1993** GENRE: **SHOOT-'EM-UP**

■ **Konami's goal was clearly to impress with 3D graphics here, as this tank battle game is about as simple as it gets.** You get behind the twin-stick controls and drive your tank around one of eight very small, simple arenas, with the aim of blowing up everybody else. Multiplayer via networked cabinets is clearly the best way to play, as the single-player game tasks you with destroying quotas of incredibly aggressive CPU drones within short time limits.

Unfortunately, Konami's *Polygonet* board wasn't a particularly famous or long-lived piece of hardware, and this is largely because it was well behind the curve when compared to the 3D hardware that Sega and Namco were pushing into arcades. As a result, this game was caught in an awkward spot – it had neither the depth nor graphical prowess to impress on the 32-bit consoles, and would have been technically impossible on 16-bit systems.



» [Arcade] The far wall you can see is the edge of the tiny overpass stage.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

TANK! TANK! TANK!

2009

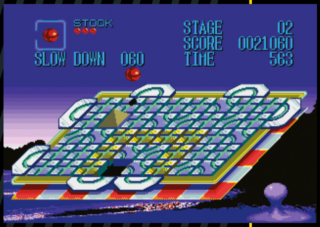
■ **We hadn't expected to see this spiritual successor to *Tokyo Wars* get a home conversion at all, so it was a surprise when it appeared on the Wii U in 2012. It's expensive now too, starting at £40.**

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

LOCO-MOTION

1988

■ **Konami's sliding puzzle appeared on the Intellivision and Tomy Tutor, plus the MSX under the name *Crazy Train*. Micronet licensed it for updated Mega Drive and Game Gear versions under the name *Junction* years later, with the former pictured here.**

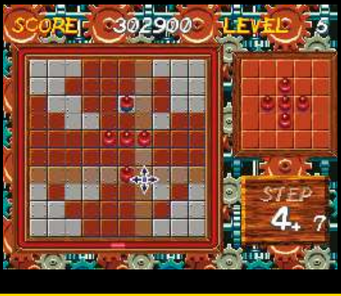


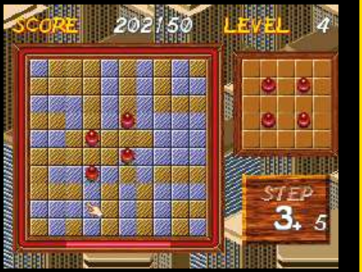
ORBS

DEVELOPER: **AMERICAN SAMMY** YEAR: **1994** GENRE: **PUZZLE**

If you fancy turning your brain to mush, this puzzler will do as good a job as any. Your goal is to arrange orbs into a pattern given at the right of the screen, within a certain number of moves. The tricky bit is that you can only move them by sliding an entire row or column of the puzzle at any time, which may cause unintended moves. If you have spare moves left at the end of a puzzle, you can carry them over to the next stage.

It's unclear as to whether this game ever actually received a full release, so the lack of any home conversions isn't really that surprising. It's a real shame though, as we feel that *Orbs* would have made for a great Game Boy or Game Gear game – in fact it may have actually fit the home market better, as this kind of puzzle is hard to solve with time pressure.





» [Arcade] This is going well, one move will solve the entire puzzle from here.

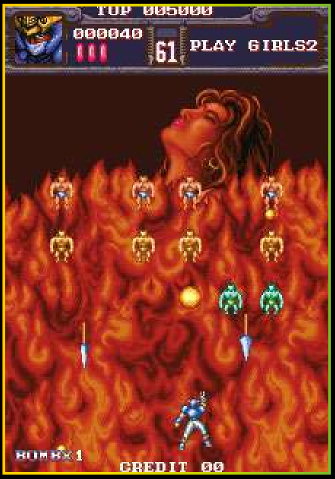
BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

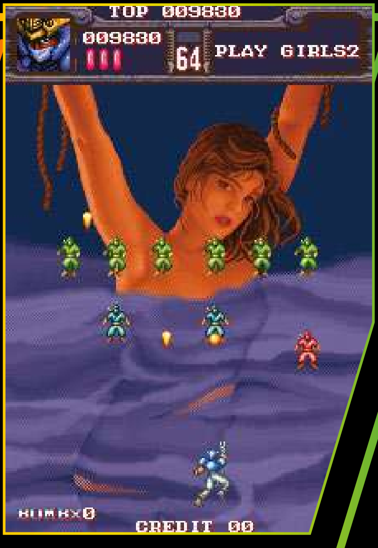
PLAY GIRLS 2

DEVELOPER: **HOT-B** YEAR: **1993** GENRE: **SHOOT-'EM-UP**

■ **We've never wondered about the target audience for those games in which you steadily reveal images of women wearing very little.** It's a cheap ploy, but sex sells. What we do wonder about is the kind of person that plays these games in an arcade environment – you know, where everybody can see you. It's a pretty brazen thing to do, when you think about it a bit.

Another brazen thing to do would be to release a fairly shoddy shoot-'em-up, a bit like *Galaga* but with bad collision detection and bullet-sponge enemies, and then try to sell it based on sex appeal. As it turns out, that's exactly what Hot-B did with *Play Girls 2*. The whole thing is a drag to play, so if you truly find this titillating, we salute you – let your masochist flag fly high.





» [Arcade] Purple smoke? Oh no, a super villain is here to interrupt our mediocre shoot-'em-up!

SIDE
Studio Profile
Low Noise
60
30 Minutes per side

SOFTWARE INVASION

The BBC Micro arrived in 1981, and brothers Simon and David Vout were quick to embrace the home-computer boom on the system with their game-development and publishing company, Software Invasion. Journey back and discover how the invasion began

WORDS BY RICHARD HEWISON

At the turn of the Eighties, teenager David Vout was attending North Staffordshire Polytechnic, studying Physics and the relatively new Computer Studies course, but with his mind wandering to the arcades and coin-ops like Centuri's arcade shooter *Phoenix*.

"My Physics teacher had a Commodore Pet in the classroom, and he let us play on it at lunchtimes," says David. "At the same time, my brother Simon was a touring classical musician, and in his downtime he was making games for the BBC Micro Model B, and he asked me to design some spaceships for a game he was working on, and I did maybe a dozen designs on graph paper."

Simon and David's father saw what they were doing, and he proposed an idea that turned the two boys' lives upside down. "He suggested to Simon that he should have a go at selling the game, so Simon took out a quarter-page black-and-white advert in several computer magazines," explains David. Simon had to come up with a name for his software label, and for better or worse he opted for Software Invasion. It wasn't a choice that David was particularly enamoured with. "If I'm honest, I never really liked the name. It made some sense but wasn't very game-like."

What happened after the advert was published was completely unexpected. "Cheques started to arrive in the post, and in the end it was by the sackful! I was at college seeing this happen and getting very stir crazy. At poly I was still writing code on punched cards!"

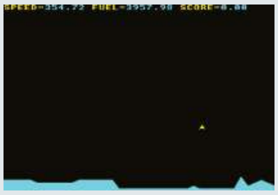
> "My Physics teacher had a Commodore Pet in the classroom, and he let us play on it at lunchtimes
>
> **David Vout**

The first game released by Simon as Software Invasion was a totally unofficial *Space Invaders* clone, followed by more arcade coin-op clones including *Galaxian* and the Atari *Lunar Lander*-inspired *Apollo*. All three games were written in machine code for a faster, smoother experience compared to many of their competitors released on the BBC. The fourth release was a Blackjack card game that included a programming disassembler tool, along with a text utility called Text Processor, all on the one cassette.

Software Invasion's first few years were, to use David's own expression, "crazy". Simon continued to write and publish new games that went down a storm with BBC owners throughout 1983, including the arcade-style games *Gunsmoke*, *3D Bomb Alley* and Vortex. He came home to visit over Christmas and brought with him a BBC Micro for his brother to begin working on, and David took to it like a duck to water. "I sat up to the early hours learning to code, eventually ending up with a single space invader, a base to defend and one bullet."

David returned to college after the Christmas break and completed his studying, but as soon as he finished in the summer he went home, packed his bags, and headed for his brother's

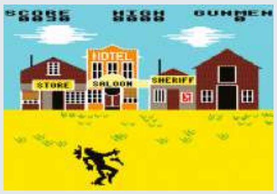
SELECTED TIMELINE



APOLLO

BBC MICRO, 1983

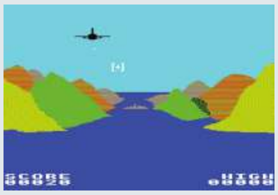
■ One of the earliest and crudest Software Invasion games, heavily inspired by Atari's *Lunar Lander.*



GUNSMOKE

BBC MICRO, 1983

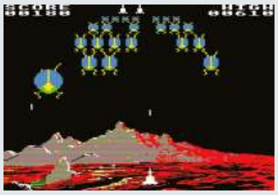
■ Inspired by Midway's *Boot Hill* arcade coin-op, *Gunsmoke* literally turned that game on its side.



3D BOMB ALLEY

BBC MICRO, 1983

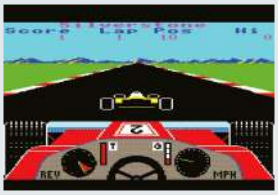
■ A realistic 3D simulation of an explosive air-sea battle, at least according to the inlay.



ATTACK ON ALPHA CENTAURI

BBC MICRO, 1983

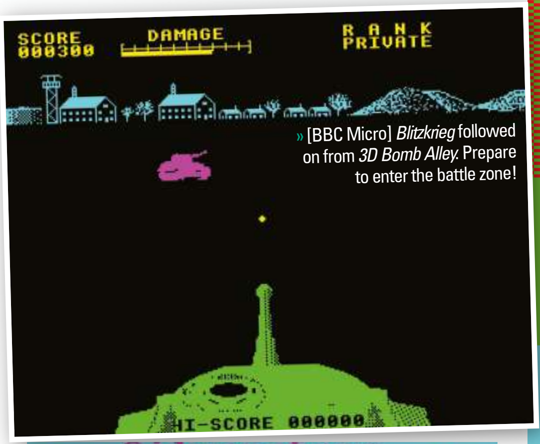
■ Battle the sting-dropping bug-eyed wasps in this arcade shooter that used a neat 3D-esque effect.



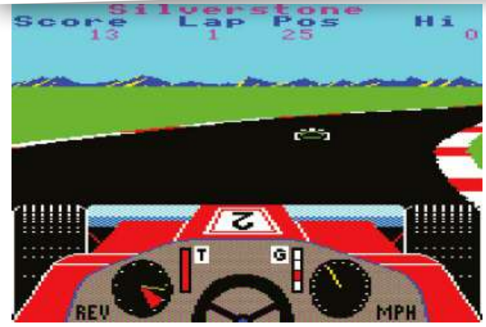
3D GRAND PRIX

BBC MICRO, 1984

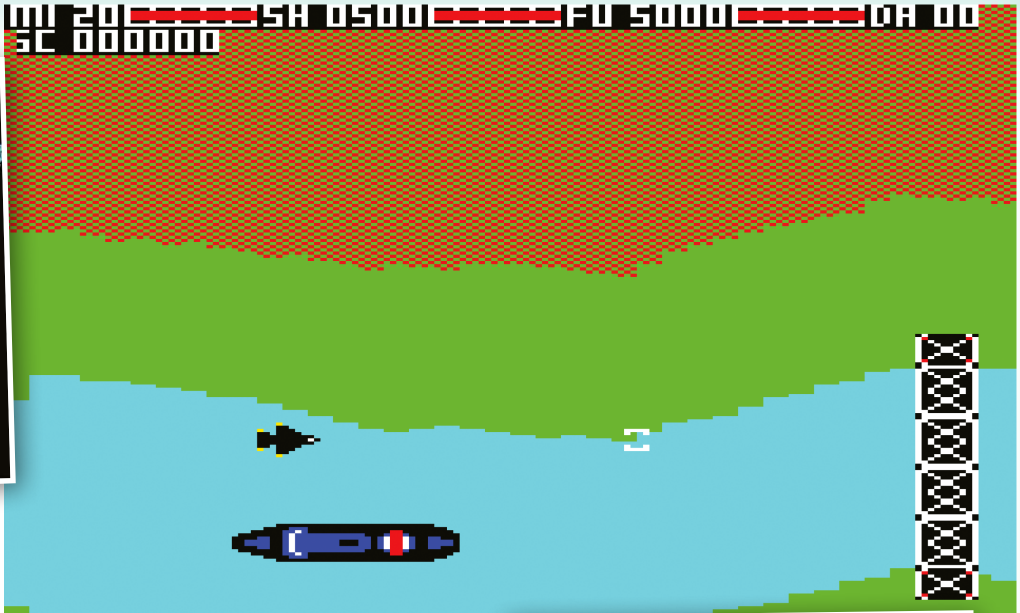
■ A racing game and Software Invasion's first BBC Micro release not written by Simon or David Vout.



» [BBC Micro] *Blitzkrieg* followed on from *3D Bomb Alley*. Prepare to enter the battle zone!



» [BBC Micro] David Vout feels that *3D Grand Prix* was every bit as playable as *Revs*.



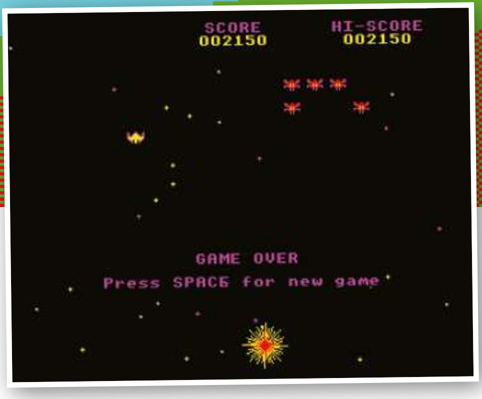
» [BBC Micro] *Eagle's Wings* is a horizontally scrolling flying arcade game with a hint of *Spy Hunter* about it.

small mid-terrace house in Wimbledon, SW18. Those heady days of the home-computer explosion in the early to mid-Eighties produced hundreds of eager programmers willing to have a go at writing and publishing games, and David was no different. He joined Simon and began working on new games. In-between coding and publishing duties, the brothers somehow found time to do up the house they were living in, with David tiling the chimney wall, among many other DIY projects.

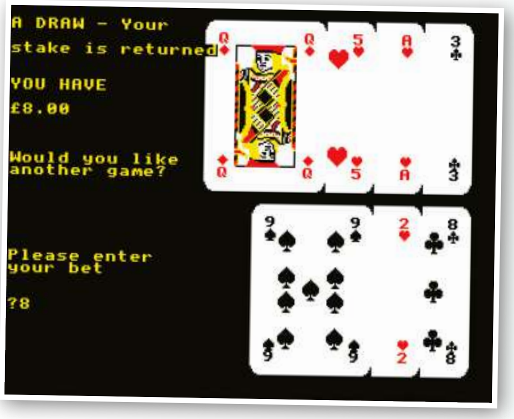
The company's success also gave the brothers the opportunity to sign games from other freelance programmers. *3D Grand Prix* for the BBC by David Mendes and Mick O'Neal was an especially noteworthy example, but success brought the pressures of competing with other bigger publishers to the forefront. Software Invasion continued to focus on the BBC Micro, but that was already a shrinking market as other platforms were starting to overtake the more expensive Acorn machine.

"Over time we met some great people who both helped us and became friends, most important of them was probably Clem Chambers, at the time a very young fresh-faced CEO at CRL," remembers David. CRL was a fellow developer and publisher, also based in London. Clem saw the brothers as kindred spirits and was happy to assist where he could, in what had quickly turned into a cut-throat and volatile market.

"They had written a BBC game called *3D Bomb Alley*. It was a hit, and I was keen to meet them and talk business," says Clem. "Simon was the 'boss' and had been a horn player in the D'Oyly Cart Theatre Orchestra. He said he hated the instrument and was happy to drop it and do software. How you get to be a pro French-horn player in an orchestra is beyond me, but there you are. David was ▶



» [BBC Micro] An expertly coded and impeccably presented unofficial clone of *Galaxians* for the BBC Micro.



A DRAW - Your stake is returned

YOU HAVE
£8.00

Would you like another game?

Please enter your bet

?8

» [BBC Micro] Simulating traditional pastimes was one way of encouraging non-computer users to have a go.

STAR MAZE

BBC MICRO, 1984

■ Released two years before *Thrust*, this game was like the vector arcade games *Asteroids* and *Gravitar*.

STAIRWAY TO HELL

BBC MICRO/ELECTRON, 1985

■ A hellishly precise arcade platformer that got converted to the Amstrad CPC the following year.

SMASH 7

BBC MICRO, 1986

■ With the Acorn market shrinking, this BBC Micro compilation offered a new game as well.

LIFE FORCE

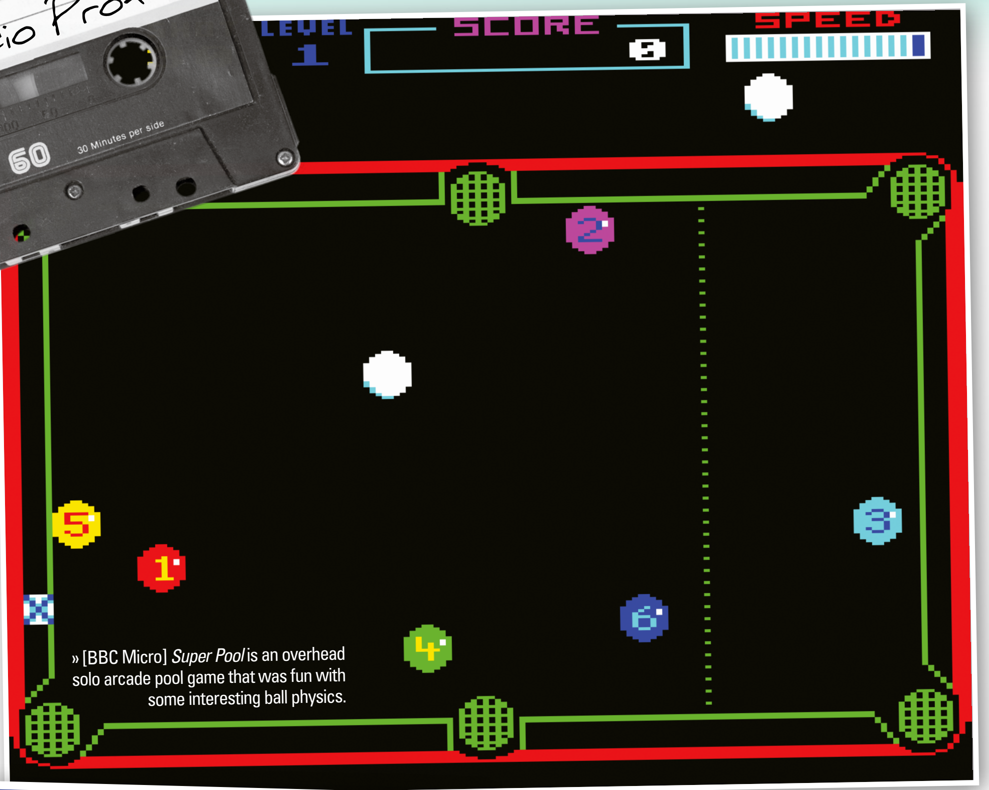
COMMODORE 64, 1987

■ A simple but decent enough arcade tank game, published by CRL and distributed by Electronic Arts.

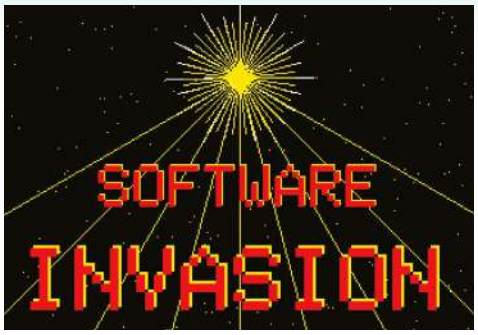
KELLOGG'S TOUR

COMMODORE 64, 1988

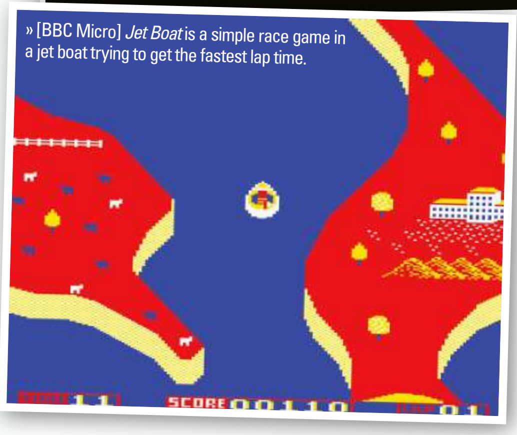
■ A joystick-waggling cycling game, with gear changes but little else changing between each course.



» [BBC Micro] *Super Pool* is an overhead solo arcade pool game that was fun with some interesting ball physics.



» The same Software Invasion loading screen was used on almost every BBC and Electron release.



» [BBC Micro] *Jet Boat* is a simple race game in a jet boat trying to get the fastest lap time.

younger and very energetic and together they made a good team."

It was quite an unusual step for a competing publisher to help like Clem did, but that wasn't how he saw things. "I never had that mentality," he says. "I like nice people, so why wouldn't I help them? I'd help anyone who was trying hard, and I could give a leg up to. You never know if something good will come of it. They were also very new to business, and it was easy for me to help them."

"Clem helped us get into the big retailers like John Menzies and Boots and that was a big thing for us," adds David. Glossy and professional inlays with improved artwork were all part and parcel of competing with the bigger guns of the industry. "We got more professional by improving with experience," remembers David. "There was no massive investment into staff, or equipment. It was much the same as it had always been, even using an ironing board to fold insert cards whilst watching TV in the front room. It was very much cottage industry all the way through."

The introduction of the BBC Micro's baby brother, the Acorn Electron in 1984 gave Software Invasion the chance to release Electron versions of its more popular titles, giving it quick access to that new market. It was also fortunate to get most of its Acorn Electron titles included in a Dixon's ten-pack bundle, sold in Dixon's stores nationwide. It was a tactic that Dixons employed many times during the home-computer boom, selling compilation packs via mail order and in store for all the popular formats.

The only Electron game not included in the Dixons bundle was Software Invasion's latest offering, *Stairway To Hell*, which David wrote for the BBC and the Electron, sold together on the one cassette. It was a tricky but rewarding platform game, requiring pixel-perfect moves and precise timing. Tony and Mark Monckton's *Chip Buster* maze game was also sold with the BBC Micro and Electron versions included together.

With the inevitable slowing down of the BBC and Electron software market, David and Simon briefly dabbled with

> "Back then we just said yes to everything!
> **David Vout**

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

DAVID VOUT

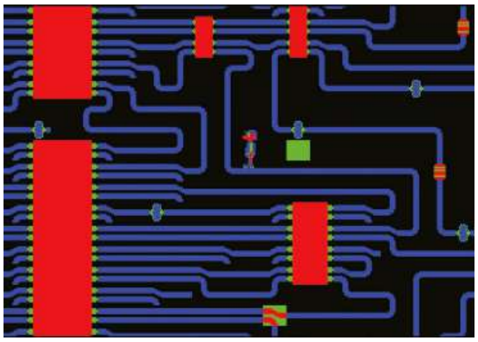
■ After Software Invasion, David Vout worked for various software studios including Krysalis where he wrote the Commodore 64 conversions of *Klax* and *Space Harrier 2*. He then created development studio 221b in Sheffield, producing some great titles including *HeroQuest*, *Blues Brothers* and *Dr Who* on the Commodore 64, before David moved back to London to work at Virgin Games in the glory days of its Disney-licensed console games.

SIMON VOUT

■ Having spent seven years creating and running Software Invasion, Simon returned to his musical roots and today is sound engineer and owner at a classical sound recording and post-production studio in Wimbledon for multimedia projects including CD, radio and video projects.

DNA OF SOFTWARE INVASION

HOW DID THE DEVELOPER STAND OUT?



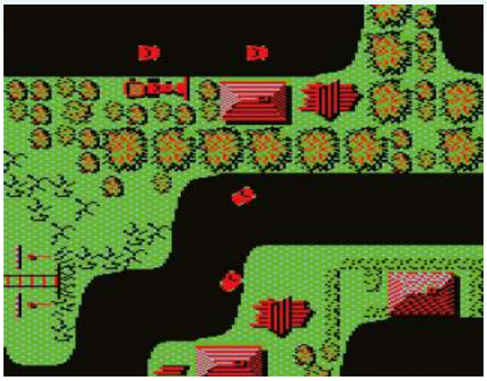
ACORN GAMES

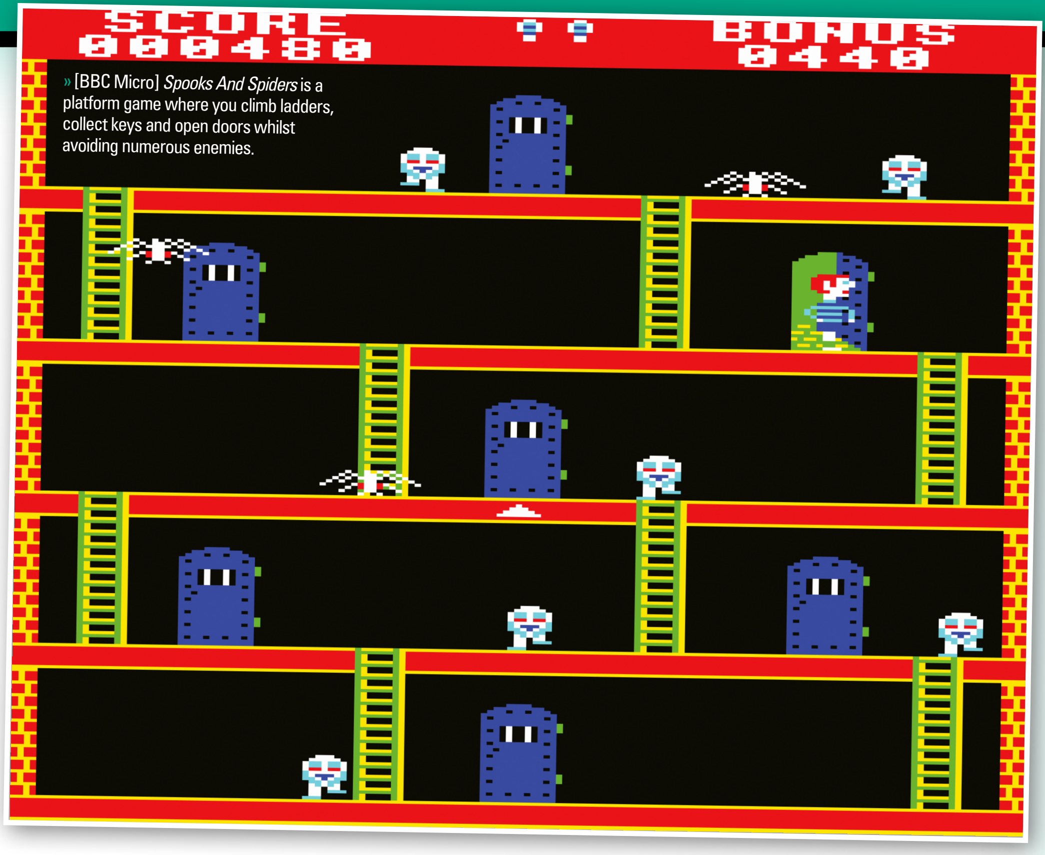
■ Much of Software Invasion's output was for the BBC Micro and the Acorn Electron, with many of the BBC games requiring only small alterations to make them run on the Electron. It was one of the bigger fish in a small and rapidly evaporating pool.

SCORE 00020

ARCADE ALL THE WAY

■ Software Invasion's focus throughout its six-year history was firmly on arcade games, with most of the early titles being unofficial and often thinly disguised clones of popular arcade coin-ops from the early Eighties. A few sport and card games were interspersed amongst the arcade titles.





» [BBC Micro] *Spooks And Spiders* is a platform game where you climb ladders, collect keys and open doors whilst avoiding numerous enemies.

Amstrad CPC games in 1987, including a conversion of *Stairway To Hell* and what turned out to be the last original game to be published under the Software Invasion label, *Street Machine*, only available on the BBC as part of its *Smash 7* compilation release.

In 1987, Clem Chambers came to the rescue, striking a deal with Electronic Arts to supply ten games with Software Invasion sub-contracted to produce some of the titles. The games included *NATO Assault Course*, which was a *Combat School* clone, an arcade shooter called *Discovery*, *Life Force*, and *Kellogg's Tour*, a cycling game. All the games for the EA-distributed CRL deal were for the Commodore 64, a computer that Software Invasion hadn't worked on before.

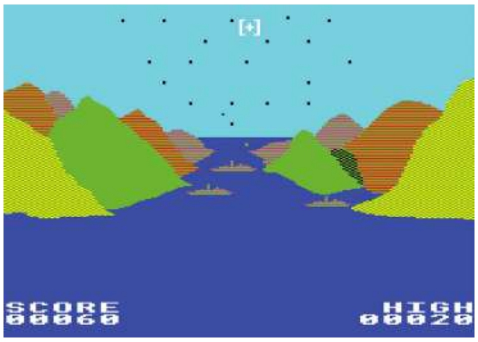
"We only had a few weeks to make most of the games, so they weren't our finest work," admits David. "We split the work between us, equal on code, then I did the art and Simon did the music. What was clever at the time was Simon took our BBC Micro's and made an interface to our Commodores, allowing us to use the superior BBC keyboard and text editor to code on then squirt it down the cable to the C64."

Unfortunately for Software Invasion and for CRL, the deal with EA turned into a bit of a disaster for both companies. "I think they had a hard learning curve with the Commodore, but I'm very vague on that whole period if I'm being honest, as I was struggling to keep my company from going down the plug hole at the time," says Clem.

A Commodore 64 conversion of *Street Machine* for Software Invasion turned out to be its last throw of the dice. Soon after producing those Commodore 64 games, Simon and David's father became terminally ill. Simon's attention was swinging back towards the music career that he had put on hold, and with coding and publishing games becoming increasingly difficult, the brothers decided to close Software Invasion and professionally headed off in very different directions. "I went to Sheffield to be with our father until he died, and Simon set up a recording studio for classical musicians, which he still does today," explains David. Software Invasion produced around twenty-five titles in five or six years, and whilst its output might be considered meagre compared to some, the fact that the company was essentially run by just two people yet still managed great success in the early years is testament to the obvious effort the brothers put into the business.

> "Clem helped us get into the big retailers like John Menzies and Boots and that was a big thing for us
>
> **David Vout**

"When I think back to those days, it's with fond memories," says David. "We were in the Wild West, trailblazers, making it up as we went along. I'm not sure many people thought it would last. To some people it felt like a fad. I was young, fresh from uni and full of self-confidence. That's what made it possible for me. I think had I been the age I am now I'd have been much more wary of it, much more calculated in my approach. Back then we just said yes to everything!"



QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

■ What made Software Invasion's games stand out from day one was the quality of the coding and the presentation. Games like *Attack On Alpha Centauri* and *3D Bomb Alley* were head and shoulders above similar titles from other early publishers on the BBC and Electron.

SCORE
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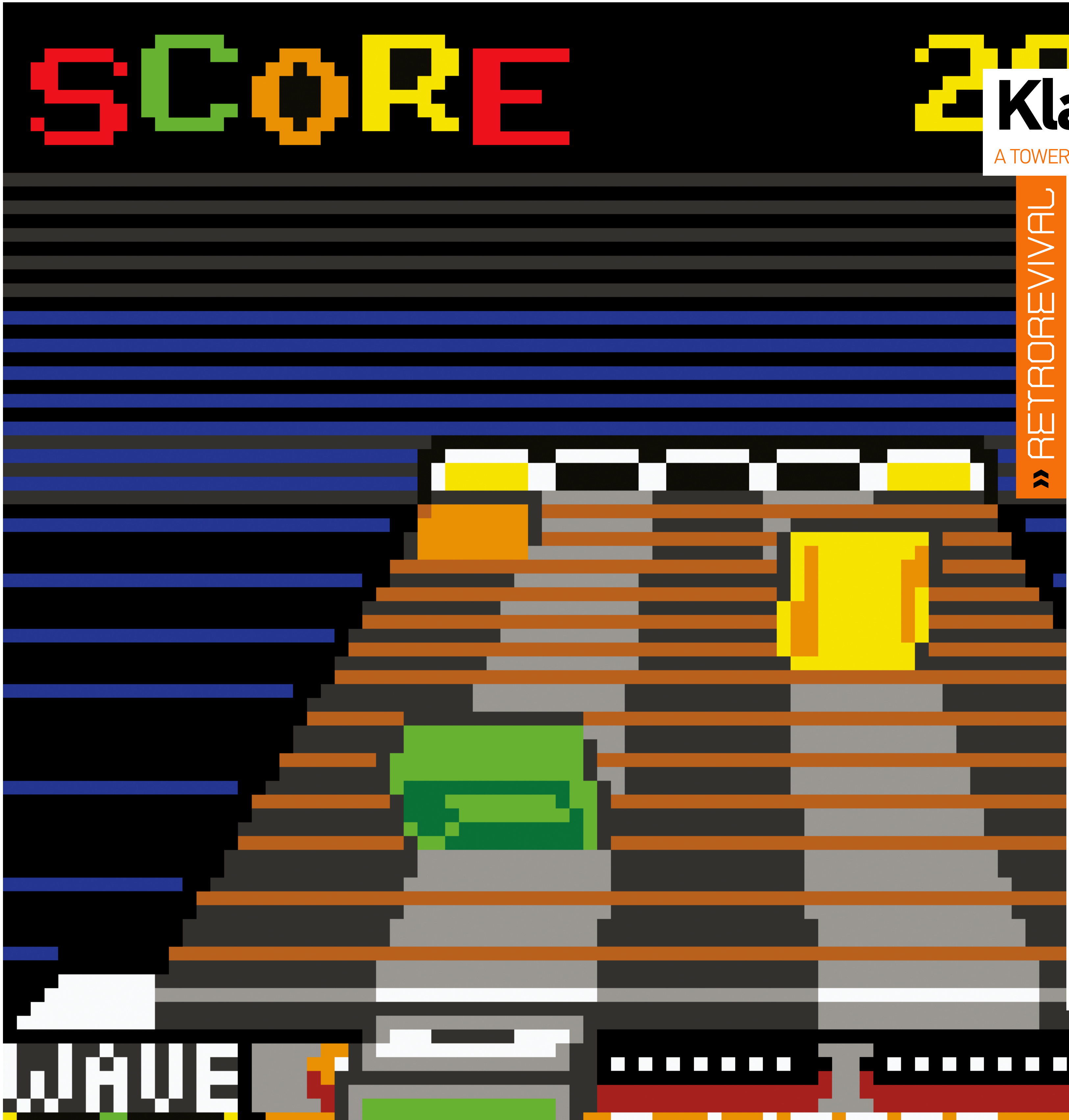
COMMODORE CREATIONS

■ With the BBC and Electron market rapidly shrinking in the late-Eighties, Software Invasion switched attention to the Commodore 64 thanks to a deal brokered by fellow publisher CRL. Whilst nowhere near its best efforts, it gave Software Invasion a welcome shot in the arm.

DIXONS DEAL

■ Software Invasion got most of its Acorn Electron games library bundled with some other titles thanks to a deal with national high-street retailer Dixons. The *Dixons 10 Pack* gave the company terrific exposure, with *3D Bomb Alley*, *Gunsmoke*, *Super Pool*, *Vortex* and *Blitzkrieg* included.



Klax

A TOWERING CONVERSION

» LYNX » 1990 » ATARI CORP

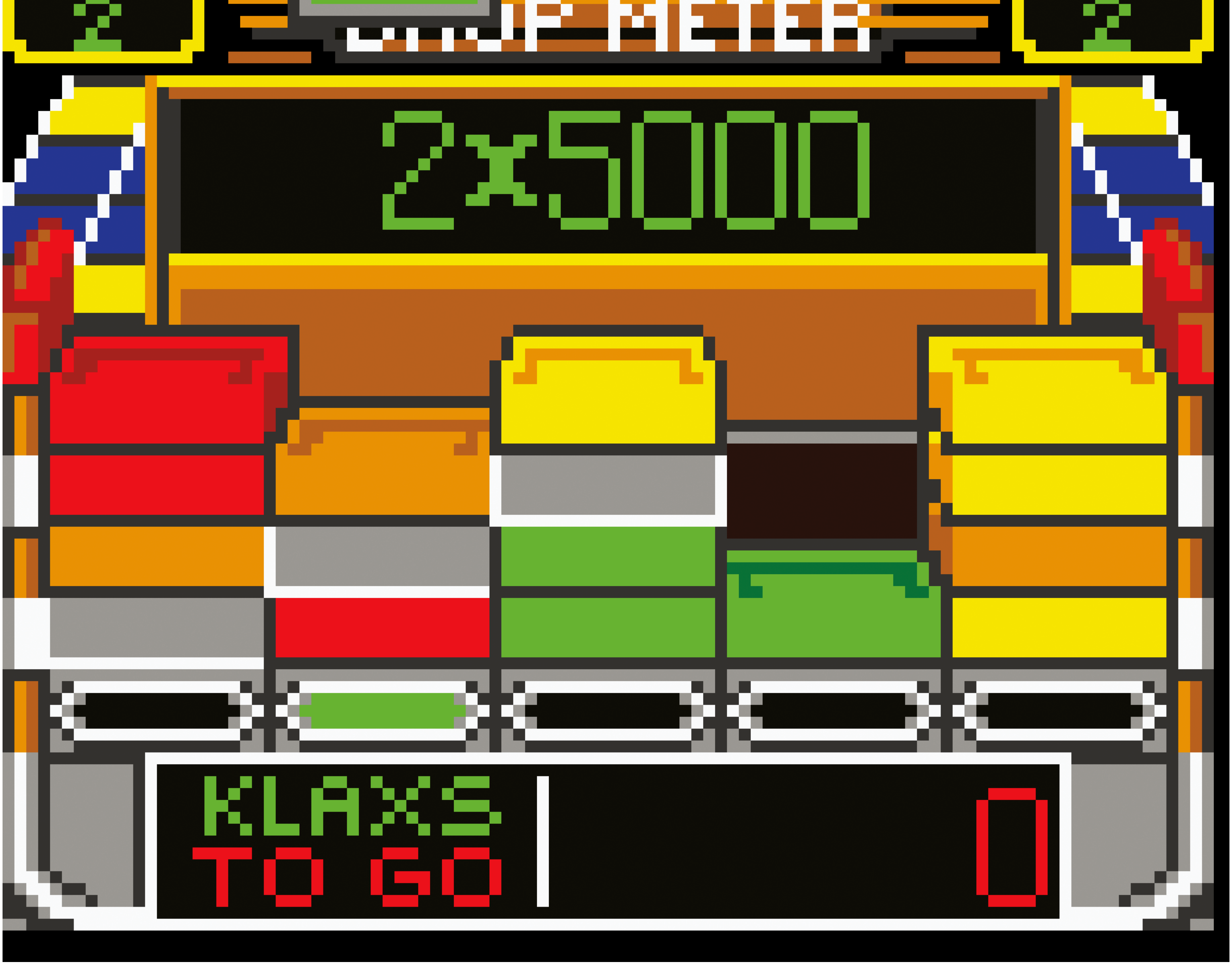
I'm not too good when it comes to puzzle games. They not only require the ability to think fast on your feet, but also expect you to deal with increasing amounts of pressure, neither of which are really in my wheelhouse. I find them intimidating, particularly when playing competitively against Nick, but occasionally a puzzle game comes along that proves impossible to ignore.

Klax is one such example of a puzzler that grabbed my attention on its release. While I didn't pay it much attention in arcades it seemed to take the gaming world by storm and everyone I knew owned a copy of it. *Klax* was everywhere and I really felt I was missing out by not owning it.

Fortunately I owned an Atari Lynx at the time and for me it had arguably one of the best versions of the hit game. Granted I never got to play much multiplayer as I only ever knew a handful of people with Atari's handheld, but *Klax* really spoke to me… literally, like all the time.

The arcade version of *Klax* was well-known for its great use of digitised speech and Greg Omi's excellent Lynx conversion was no different. Each level starts with a female announcer saying "Klax Wave" and you'll often hear little squeals of delight or other phrases from her when you align a specific row of blocks. There's even applause at the end of a stage, which is a lovely thing to hear after a tough wave.

These little sonic touches add immeasurably to the overall feel and atmosphere of Atari's game, and made me feel quite clever whenever I managed to finish a stage, and let's face it, we all like to feel clever. I don't currently own any version of *Klax* any more, but I'd love to revisit the Lynx version at some point. I wonder if I'm still any good at it? *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ULTIMATE GUIDE

SUPER SPACE INVADERS '91

STRANGE SIGHTINGS IN THE SKY. INCREDIBLE REPORTS OF CATTLE MUTILATION. THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE EXPLANATION: THE INVADERS ARE BACK! AND THIS TIME, THEY'RE FASTER, MEANER AND MORE POWERFUL THAN EVER BEFORE! FORTUNATELY, IN TAITO'S 1990 FOLLOW-UP TO THE CLASSIC ARCADE SHOOT-'EM-UP, SO ARE YOU…

WORDS BY GRAEME MASON

CLASSIC INVADER

ASTEROID

ALIEN SOLDIER

SPACE STATION

Few videogames have the cachet of Taito's *Space Invaders*. This fixed-screen legend kick-started the popular shoot-'em-up genre and remains admired today, 38 years after those incessant aliens began their inexorable descent on the Earth. *Space Invaders II* introduced new invaders in 1980, while *Return Of The Invaders* gave us a fresh, colourful display and some puzzling enemy formations in 1985. Now, those pesky aliens have all sorts of devious tricks up their constantly flexing sleeves; fortunately, there are some improvements to the player's vehicle as well. Gone is the cumbersome and singular shot tank of the first game. Instead, this lithe machine (nicknamed CG30) zips across the bottom of the screen, ready to dispense laser death to any alien foolish enough to cross its path.

With Midway's unofficial *Space Invaders II* and Taito's own sequels not quite exhilarating arcade customers the way the original did, the latter coin-op giant opted to introduce some creative elements to the classic *Space Invaders* gameplay. So while the fixed screen remains, *Super Space Invaders* borrows multiple gameplay elements from its peers, welding them to the renowned sounds and enemies of the 1978 icon.

Originally titled *The Majestic 12*, or *MJ-12*, *Super Space Invaders* takes place ten years after the first successful defeat of the predatory aliens. The invaders are pouring into our solar system via a circular wormhole, and their gargantuan fleets are assembling above the Earth. Once more, it's up to a lone hero to take the fight to these aggressors and blast them back into their own space.

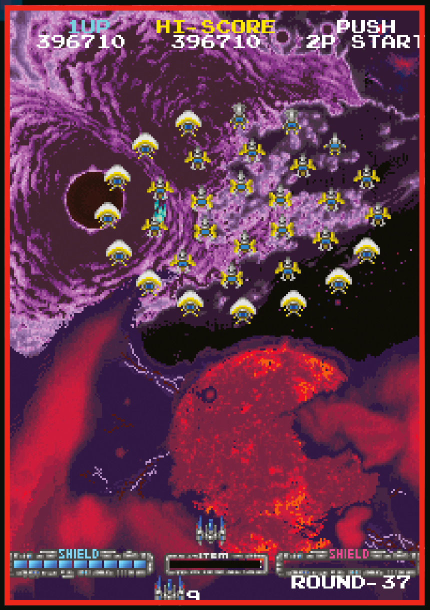
In terms of gameplay, the template for *Super Space Invaders* broadly sticks to the formula that made the first game a smash: a series of alien phalanxes bob above the player, their bombs, lasers and missiles raining down upon your position. Each set of invaders descends the screen, lowering when it reaches an edge. Should any alien reach the bottom of the screen, the player loses a life – not ideal, but a little less terminal than the original's apocalyptic game over.

After a familiar foe initially confronts the player, there are several new types of invader, each with a unique ability. Insectoid flying enemies break formation and wheel down towards the player in the spirit of *Galaxian*; some invaders split when shot, creating two more opponents; others grow fatter with each wound, finally bursting after absorbing more laser fire. There is also a more extensive range of formations. Humanoid figures circle above the player, spinning as they descend while double banks of invaders lower at an even faster rate. Long robots and insects infest a factory-style level while one despicable set of these meanies warps across the screen, culminating in an even-quicker decline.

Furthermore, in stark contrast to the bare backdrops of the previous games, *Super Space Invaders* boasts a colourful and dramatic set of environments. A rotary space station hovers innocently; dramatic clouds pass underneath as the CG30 takes to the skies; the streets and skyline of a shattered city, turned crimson by the death and destruction of war; and the powerful purple hue of the space around the wormhole, the source of this latest dastardly invasion. Before these vistas is a relentless procession of extra-terrestrial terror – and we haven't even gotten to the worst of it yet.

For the first time in *Space Invaders*' history, the invaders have brought some extra special might to the battle with a series of enormous bosses. The first of these metallic monsters appears at the end of round 11, discharging laser beams from its Doctor Octopus-styled tentacles. Next, a copper-coloured saucer splits into two, each segment ▶

> "MY TASK WAS MADE MORE INTERESTING BY THE FACT I DIDN'T TAKE ANY OF THE ORIGINAL SPRITE OR BACKGROUND WORK FROM THE SOURCE"
> **Jolyon Myers**



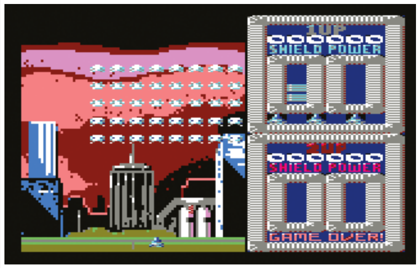
» [Arcade] Taking on a bunch of spiralling invaders as the wormhole lurks in the background.

MUTATING INVADER

FLYING SAUCER

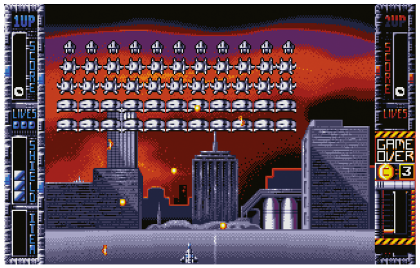
CONVERSION CAPERS

TAKE THE BATTLE HOME WITH RETRO GAMER'S GUIDE TO SUPER SPACE INVADERS ON COMPUTERS AND CONSOLES



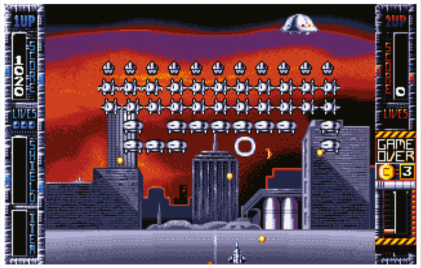
AMSTRAD CPC

■ The game's simplicity is about all the Amstrad version of *Super Space Invaders* has going for it. Unfortunately, horribly blocky sprites, uninspired sound effects and, most damningly, slow and turgid gameplay render this port utterly unplayable and a grave disappointment for *Invaders* fans.



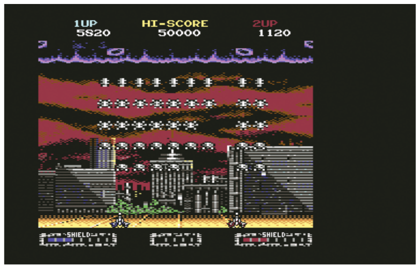
ATARI ST

■ The cartoon intro sequence looks ace on the Atari computer, and some sweet graphics are on display courtesy of Jolyon Myers. But, alas, it all plays a little too sluggishly, and you can't help but wish there had been a bit more fine-tuning to the game itself.



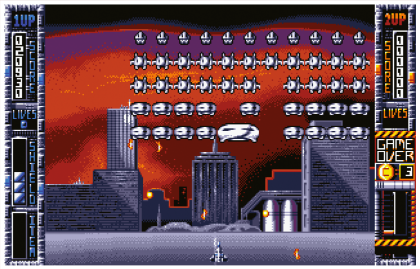
AMIGA

■ Jolyon Myers' jolly little tune is perfectly presented on the Amiga, as are the other various accoutrements. The info bars are pushed to the sides to adapt to the different displays, and while it's slower than the arcade game, it possesses bags of charm and sharp, colourful graphics.



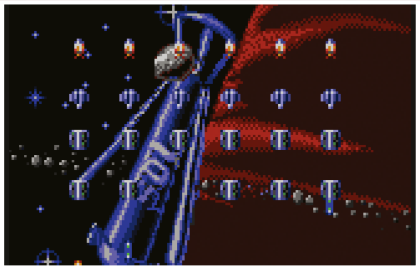
COMMODORE 64

■ Everything about the C64 port of *Super Space Invaders* exudes class. There's a fantastic loading screen, beautiful background graphics and the game itself is fast and smooth. Together with its neat opening sequence, this is comfortably the best of the 8-bit versions to hit home computers.



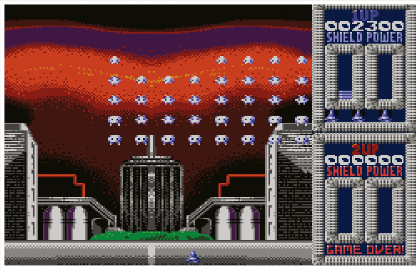
DOS

■ Once ensconced with VGA and sound card support, this PC conversion is another decent attempt at *Super Space Invaders*. The cool introduction is present once more, and the VGA graphics are adequate – it's just a shame the weak controls aren't quite on the nose.



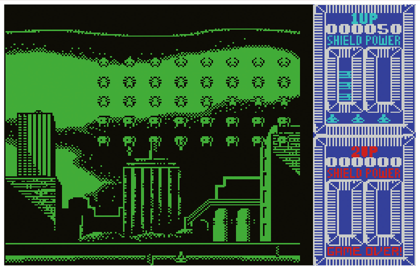
GAME GEAR

■ On a handheld that didn't always feature great shoot-'em-ups, *Super Space Invaders* was a breath of fresh laser fire back in 1991. While the tiny display compelled some necessary sacrifices, the game's core elements are recreated well, including the hysterical Cattle Mutilation round.



MASTER SYSTEM

■ Presentation is excellent in this Master System game. With the player craft renamed to Maverick 6, the majority of the arcade game's levels are intact, including the fun Cattle Mutilation level. Containing silky simultaneous two-player action, this is one of the best home ports of *Super Space Invaders*.



ZX SPECTRUM

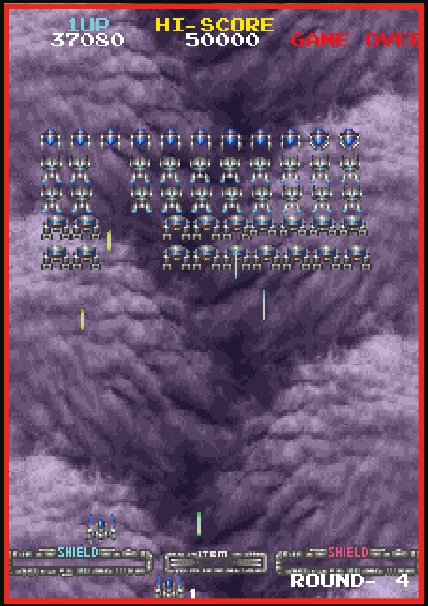
■ There's an impressive attempt at replicating *Super Space Invaders*' colourful backgrounds on the Spectrum, but regrettably, the two-colour scheme often renders aliens and missiles invisible. The gameplay is relatively intact, although many improvements are gone. A reasonable effort for the 128K Spectrum.

FLYING INVADER

> "EVERYONE LOVED THE COW ABDUCTION BONUS LEVELS WHICH WAS THE MOST OBVIOUS B-MOVIE ELEMENT"
>
> Jolyon Myers

▶ peppering the player with blue laser fire; there's a vast mothership with a vulnerable-yet-deadly eye; and the penultimate major villain, a sleek snake-like craft that releases a thick and lethal laser beam across the screen. Each boss requires specific tactics and lightning reflexes, and the odd power-up doesn't harm, either.

In addition to these mega-baddies, *Super Space Invaders* interjects its invasion action with a series of bonus stages known as Cattle Mutilation. Those scheming invaders are even after our cows, plucking them from their grassy havens and abducting them for who-knows-what despicable purposes. In this stage, the player blasts the numerous flying saucers that whiz around the screen, preventing them from taking our beloved bovines, each of which remaining at the end of the level gains the player a sweet and milky 5,000 point bonus. Every destroyed saucer also yields points, based on the altitude of the invader when shot, ranging from 2,000 points at the very summit of the screen to 100 points for a point-blank kill.

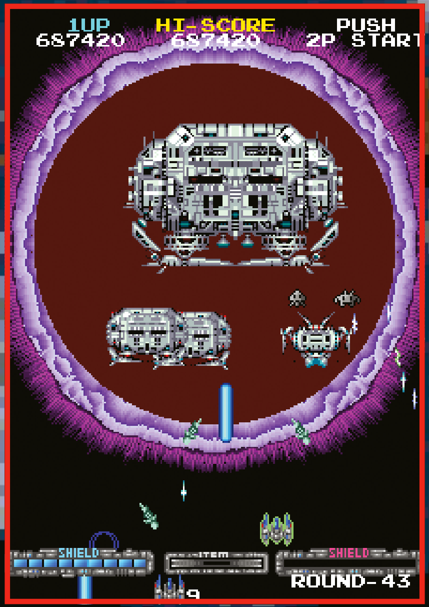


» [Arcade] With the threat on Earth temporarily negated, it's time to take to the skies.

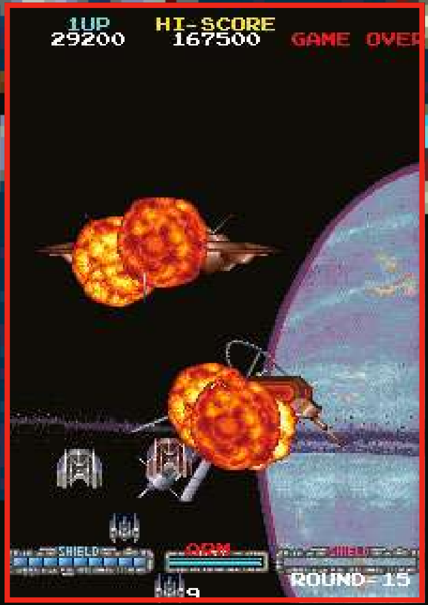
While on the subject of unarmed enemies, it would be remiss not to mention the buzzing motherships that continue to monitor the battle below. These mini-bosses differ depending on which variety of invader lurks below it, from the classic saucer of the early stages to the crimson-glowing, madly gyrating version in the cloud stage and the massive gleaming bug that scuttles across the insectoid levels. While harmless to the player, taking down these enemies should always be a priority because when destroyed, they drop a power-up, spinning down the screen in a fashion similar to Taito's bat-and-ball hit from a few years earlier, *Arkanoid*. These power-ups are a core mechanic of *Super Space Invaders*. Each one is dangerous to the marauding aliens yet has limited use – timing is everything [see Blitz The Invaders boxout].

On top of all these innovations (at least for the *Space Invaders* franchise), the player's vehicle now has a helpful shield to repel enemy attacks with boosts arriving as 'S' power-ups from vanquished flying motherships. Typically beginning with three, a skilful player can collect up to eight of these shields in addition to their regular life count. Finally, if you find the alien invasion too much to handle, a second player can simultaneously enter the fray, doubling humankind's firepower against these raiding invaders.

» [Arcade] The final boss takes its common invaders and transforms them into these rampaging behemoths.



n an era of beat-'em-ups featuring huge sprites and ultra-slick 3D driving games, *Super Space Invaders* is a delightful anachronism to a time when the purity of gameplay trumped flashy visuals and complex bonus systems. These elements made *Super Space Invaders* a natural target for software house Domark to bring the game into our homes. The publisher employed its in-house development team and impressed almost entirely across the board with its entertaining conversions, often going so far as providing extra features and introductions.



» [Arcade] Dramatic explosions accompany each boss takedown.

In arcades, the invaders would inevitably return following the success of *Super Space Invaders*. Emboldened by the destruction they caused in 1990, the troublesome aliens returned four years later in *Space Invaders DX*, including novel two-player versus and mash-up parody modes.

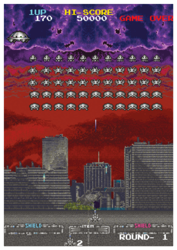
Nevertheless, the colourful display and new gameplay mechanics, wedded to the sounds and memories of the 1978 hit, still combine today to make *Super Space Invaders* what many consider the pinnacle of this legendary series. ✱

ALL YOUR BASE ARE MINE

YOUR RETRO GAMER GUIDE TO THE MANY VARIETIES OF INVADER IN SUPER SPACE INVADERS

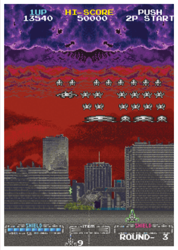
CLASSIC INVADERS

The original invading aliens, with an occasional twist such as filing downwards each time you destroy an invader on the bottom row.



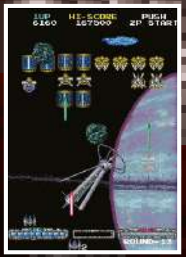
MUTATING INVADERS

They may look like classic invaders, but shooting these aliens doubles their size. They then take another two shots to kill.



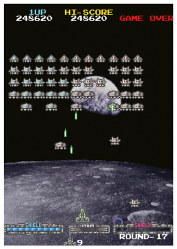
JAR INVADERS

These critters are trapped inside a specimen jar – but are still able to fire! Released from their prison, their firing rate becomes more intense.



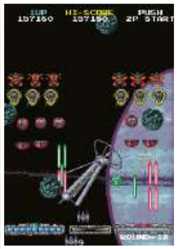
FORMATION BREAKERS

These nippy invaders break free from their strict formation, dive-bombing the player while their pals continue to rain hot laser death down the screen.



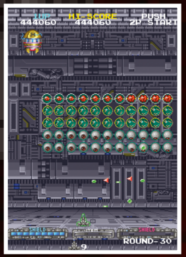
INSECTOID INVADERS

These insect-like aliens hurl rocks and green pods while their companions dispense laser fire. Look out for the impervious red beam they fire.



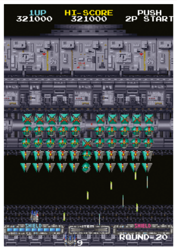
BALL INVADERS

A curious selection of eyeballs and other spherical objects. Beware the former as you can only dodge its invulnerable bomb attack.



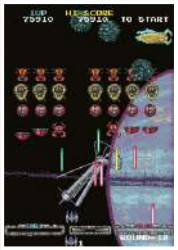
SMALL ROBOTS

They may appear innocuous, yet this angular collection of robotic enemies will soon have you scrambling with its intense barrage of laser fire.



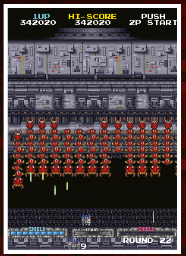
GLOWING BUGS

A set of glowing bugs is protected by a row of spheres which spit long invincible beams down at the player. Needless to say, they're quite tough.



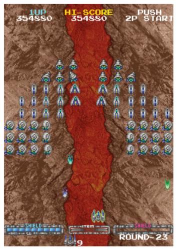
LONG BUGS

A long bug similar to the robot that starts low and is soon too close for comfort with its pincer face. Another bullet-spitting nightmare that can cause trouble for you.



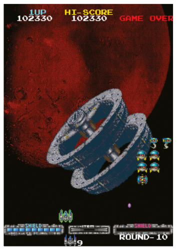
MOLLUSCS

Split into two fast-descending groups, these crustacean invaders drop hazardous bombs. Unfortunately, you cannot destroy the blue variety.



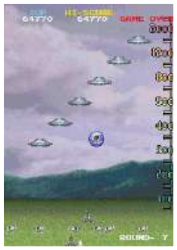
LARGE ROBOTS

These Transformer-type robots start low and plummet down the screen quickly while spouting copious fire on the player. Take them out quickly.



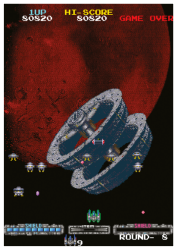
CATTLE-RUSTLIN' SAUCERS

Unarmed, these saucers dive down to Earth to capture unwitting bovines. Super quick and devious, take care when they have a cow on board.



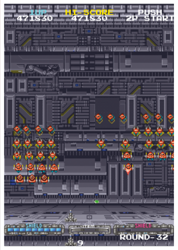
SPLITTERS

Think you've taken out an invader? Think again as these marauders split into two when shot, making double trouble for the player. They're a right pain!



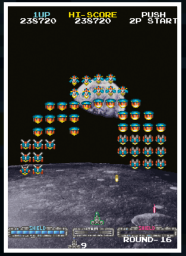
WARPERS

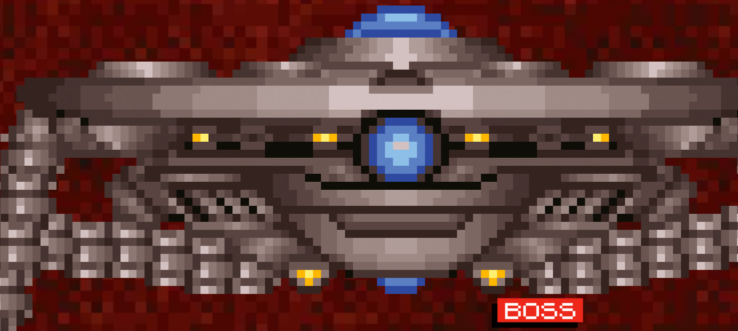
Once they reach the edge of the screen, this bunch of aliens warps across to the other side. Not particularly dangerous, but disorientating.

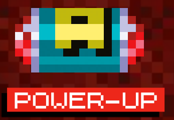


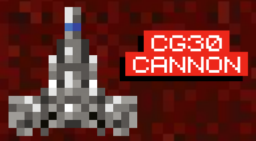
SPREADER INVADERS

Forming two distinct phalanxes, this combination of colourful Invaders moves against each other and the edge of the screen, ensuring faster descent.







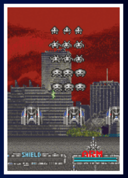


BLITZ THE INVADERS

IT'S TIME TO FIGHT BACK WITH RETRO GAMER'S GUIDE TO SUPER SPACE INVADERS' POWER-UPS

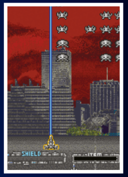
BASES

These constructs echo the original's buildings and can be pushed up the screen, causing invaders to explode upon contact.



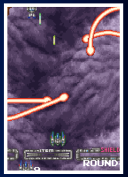
BUSTER LASER

This is a solid and robust blue band that thrusts upwards, destroying anything in its path – an excellent weapon for quickly clearing a threatening wave.



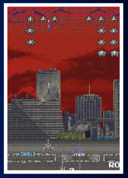
DESTROY LASER

The Destroy Laser is the perfect weapon when you absolutely have to kill every last invader. Fire, and let it do all the work!



DOUBLE SHOT

In addition to gaining extra shields from power-ups, there are also extra shots, turning your CG30 into a rapid-fire beast.



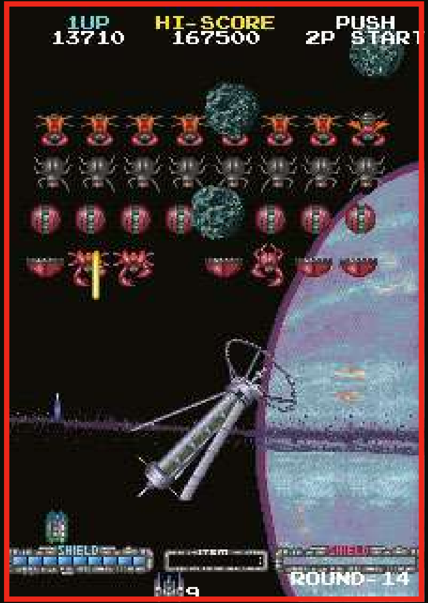
DEVELOPER Q&A

RETRO GAMER CHATS TO JOLYON MYERS, PART OF THE TEAM BEHIND SEVERAL OF DOMARK'S HOME PORTS OF SUPER SPACE INVADERS

Were you aware of the arcade machine?
I'm pretty sure I first heard of it when I was told of some upcoming conversions we might be taking on. When I saw there was a new version of *Space Invaders*, I was very interested and told my bosses I'd like to work on it.

Which versions did you work on?
Primarily the Amiga and ST versions, but I also created the art for the Sega Master System and Spectrum.

Did you work from an actual arcade machine?
My task was made more interesting by the fact I didn't take any of the original sprite or background work from the source. I can't remember exactly, but I do know we had trouble getting that data onto our machines and it was more interesting to me to create the art from scratch. I would go downstairs where we had the actual arcade machine and literally sketch the sprites and backgrounds onto paper and then recreate them in Deluxe Paint on my Amiga.



» [Arcade] Taking on the Invaders as an asteroid storm rages.

What did you think of the game's humour?
Everyone loved the cow abduction bonus levels which was the most obvious B-movie element. This inspired me to take that theme further and add a lot more original content. The music I wrote quite obviously used that theme but I also decided to add an animated intro and outro which came on a separate disk. I also added a *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*-inspired story sequence that wasn't in the arcade.

Which versions were the more challenging to make?
Cramming the art for each alien into a 8x8 character for the Master System took as precise pixel work as I could muster at the time.

You worked on the sound and SFX as well.
For the sound FX, I was able to go through the arcade game in debug mode and play every effect separately which helped greatly as I wanted to replicate the original shooting and enemy death sounds, along with that bass-note sequence that speeds up in the background. I'd hook up a sampler box to the audio output and grab everything individually straight into the Amiga.

Arcade conversions didn't always have the best rep – but *Super Space Invaders* was well-received on most platforms.

> "WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN A SIMPLE CONVERSION OF A BASIC GAME WAS RELEASED AS SOMETHING MORE THAN THAT IN MY OPINION"
> Jolyon Myers

I'm proud that myself and the others put more into the project than may have been considered necessary. What could have been a simple conversion of a basic game was released as something more than that in my opinion. We all did something to make it more fun for ourselves to convert, and I think it's better for it.

Our thanks to Jolyon for his time.

CG30 SPACESHIP

INSECTOID INVADER

FLYING SAUCER BONUS

FIRE FLOWER

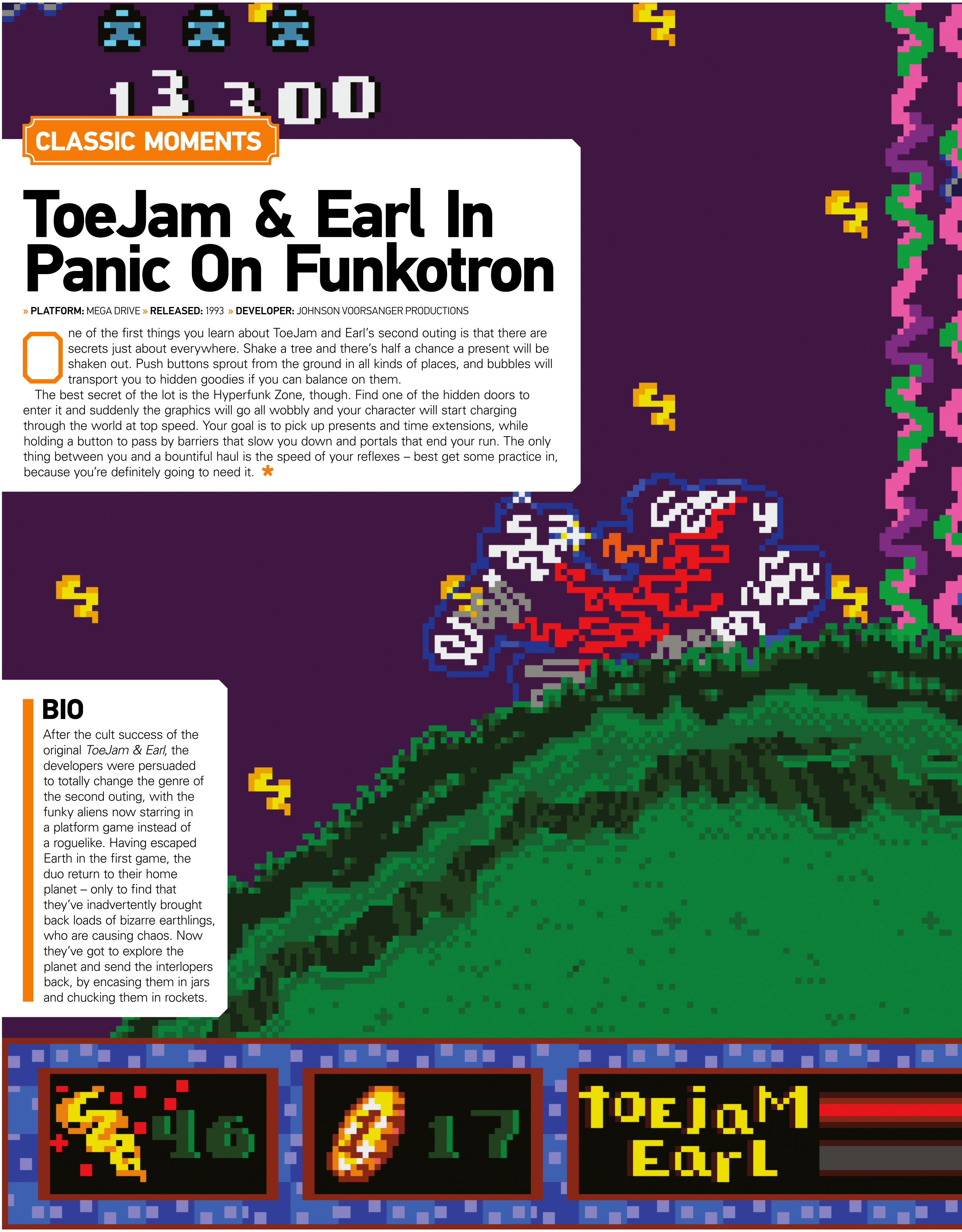
Almost a smart bomb in nature, the Fire Flower bursts from the CG30 and unleashes several fiery spirals that kill anything they touch.

RIBBON BEAM

Also known as the Hyper Laser, this beautiful-yet-deadly ripple destroys anything in its path. It also protects the player from enemy fire.

TIME STOP

This eye-catching Lepidoptera flutters up the screen, twitching its wings and pausing time, freezing the invaders and turning them into sitting ducks.



CLASSIC MOMENTS

ToeJam & Earl In Panic On Funkotron

» **PLATFORM:** MEGA DRIVE » **RELEASED:** 1993 » **DEVELOPER:** JOHNSON VOORSANGER PRODUCTIONS

One of the first things you learn about ToeJam and Earl's second outing is that there are secrets just about everywhere. Shake a tree and there's half a chance a present will be shaken out. Push buttons sprout from the ground in all kinds of places, and bubbles will transport you to hidden goodies if you can balance on them.

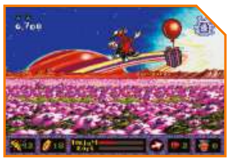
The best secret of the lot is the Hyperfunk Zone, though. Find one of the hidden doors to enter it and suddenly the graphics will go all wobbly and your character will start charging through the world at top speed. Your goal is to pick up presents and time extensions, while holding a button to pass by barriers that slow you down and portals that end your run. The only thing between you and a bountiful haul is the speed of your reflexes – best get some practice in, because you're definitely going to need it. *

BIO

After the cult success of the original *ToeJam & Earl*, the developers were persuaded to totally change the genre of the second outing, with the funky aliens now starring in a platform game instead of a roguelike. Having escaped Earth in the first game, the duo return to their home planet – only to find that they've inadvertently brought back loads of bizarre earthlings, who are causing chaos. Now they've got to explore the planet and send the interlopers back, by encasing them in jars and chucking them in rockets.

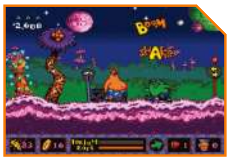
MORE CLASSIC TOEJAM & EARL IN PANIC ON FUNKOTRON MOMENTS

Magnificent Meadow



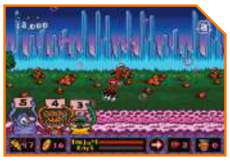
The first time you lay eyes on Mac Daddy Meadow, it is likely to blow you away – it's one of the most colourful and detailed scenes to be seen on the Mega Drive, and there's plenty of parallax scrolling to boot. It's no walk in the park though, as there are pesky earthlings to capture here too.

Rhythmic Repetition



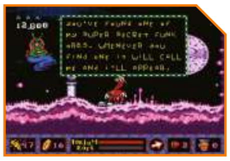
Years before PaRappa was taking martial arts lessons from an onion, ToeJam and big Earl were following the rhythms of Peabo and Sharla in the Jam Out minigames. Repeating the button prompts you see is simple in theory, but memory and timing are required to avoid the indignity of being rated Lame.

Fungal Fling



One of the more bizarre minigames available during your adventure is the Fungus Olympics. The pink growths look spongy, but they act like trampolines and you've got to bounce on them, performing flips for a trio of judges. It pays to perform well, as good scores will earn you points and Super Jars.

Tips And Trixie



In certain places throughout the game, you'll happen across Trixie's hidden lairs. They're well worth searching for, because there's more than just the satisfaction of discovering a secret at stake – finding one will give you a reward for the rest of the stage, such as unlimited coins or Super Jars.

THE MAKING OF Agony

STUNNING VISUALS AND A HAUNTING DARK FANTASY SETTING ESTABLISHED AGONY AS A VIDEOGAME THAT FLIES HIGH IN THE MEMORIES OF MANY AMIGA FANS. THIS IS THE STORY OF HOW THE TECHNICALLY IMPRESSIVE SIDE-SCROLLING SHOOTER GREW WINGS AND SOARED

WORDS BY GRAHAM PEMBREY

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** PSYGNOSIS
- » **DEVELOPER:** ART & MAGIC
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **PLATFORM:** AMIGA
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

NO, NEVER OUTSIDE
SYSTEM: COMMODORE 64
YEAR: 1989

UNREAL
SYSTEM: AMIGA
YEAR: 1999

OUTCAST (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1999

At a packed 1991 European Computer Trade Show in London, a group of young Belgian game developers was buzzing with excitement. Artists Franck Sauer and Marc Albinet, along with programmer Yves Grolet, were attending care of Ubisoft to promote their mystical platform shooter hybrid *Unreal*. But they had also brought with them an early prototype of something new. It was a dark fantasy shoot-'em-up with an owl as the protagonist, and their ultimate hope was to get the demo in front of their dream publisher Psygnosis.

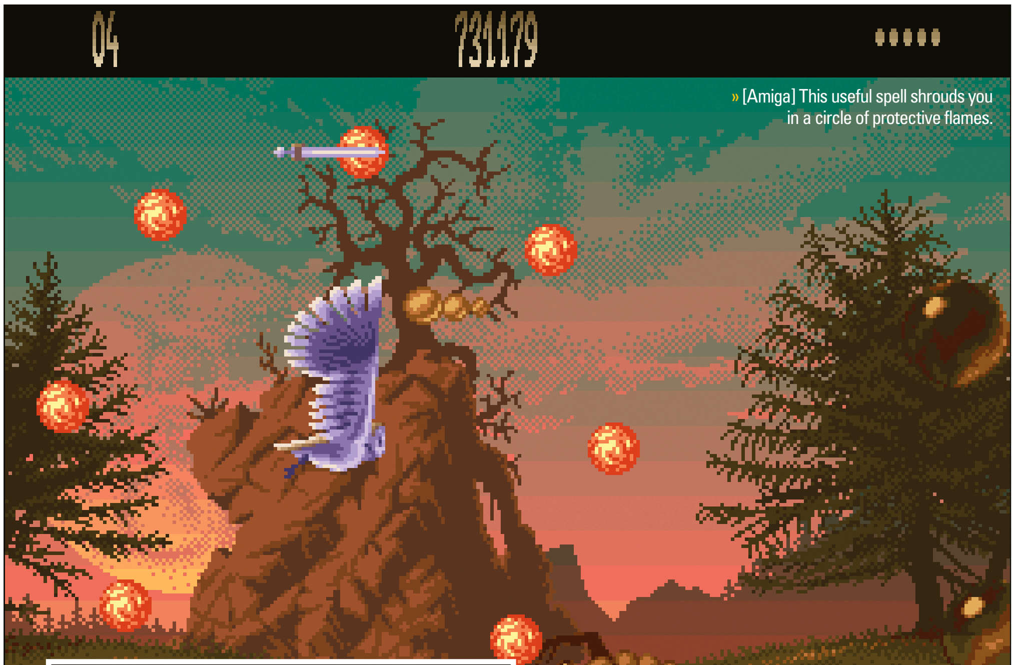
Just as planned, the group managed to get talking with Psygnosis producer Steve Riding, who was overseeing half of the external games published by the company at the time. Even better, Steve instantly expressed an interest in producing the game. "We were massively impressed by the quality of the demo, and the team too," Steve told us. "The graphics and smoothness were immediately impressive. It was clear it would become one of the Psygnosis big-box products once completed. Having an owl as the main character didn't hurt either." The synergy with the publisher's iconic owl logo was perfect. Contracts were signed a few days later. The development team returned to Belgium to start work, with a bold ambition to create the best shoot-'em-up on the Amiga.

Franck Sauer takes the story of *Agony* back to his school days. "I started working on games with Yves during our high-school years, on a Commodore 64 game called *No, Never Outside*. We became friends and we felt that between us we covered all the grounds to create great games." As the pair worked together for Ubisoft on *Iron Lord*, they also connected with Marc Albinet, whose portfolio included the horizontal shooter *Ilyad*. Having created shooter levels together for *Unreal* too, the group – which decided to rebrand from Ordilogic to Art & Magic – felt they could do a good job of putting a unique otherworldly spin on the popular side-scrolling shooter genre. "I think the vision was well shared among us all," Franck remembers. "At the same time, these projects were simple by today's standards, so that was pretty much a given. We would say, 'Let's make a fantasy style shoot-'em-up with an owl and six different environments.'

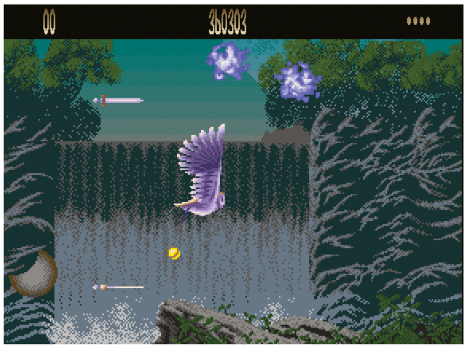
» Franck Sauer is a videogame artist and lecturer who cofounded Art & Magic.

» Steve Riding is CEO of Unexpected Developments and was a former producer at Psygnosis.

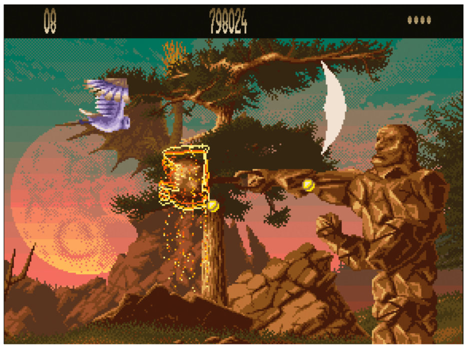
» Tim Wright, an award-winning videogame music composer, worked on *Agony*.



» [Amiga] This useful spell shrouds you in a circle of protective flames.



» [Amiga] Those blue orbs might look like power-ups, but don't be fooled.



» [Amiga] Tackling this boss is made easier using a Phantom Owl spell.

> "THE GRAPHICS AND SMOOTHNESS WERE IMMEDIATELY IMPRESSIVE. IT WAS CLEAR IT WOULD BECOME ONE OF THE PSYGNOSIS BIG-BOX PRODUCTS ONCE COMPLETED"
>
> **STEVE RIDING**

We would cheer and that was it. On the technical side however, there were a lot of challenges as soon as we tried to compete with the best games on the platform."

One game Franck and the team were particularly keen to compete with was *Shadow Of The Beast*. The Psygnosis platformer had wowed Amiga gamers with its two layers of lush parallax scrolling. Franck and the team felt they could go one step further. "I think our balance was always on the technical side as opposed to the gameplay side, which obviously is not necessarily a very good thing when making games. When we saw a technically accomplished game, we would take that as a personal challenge and try to do better. That's what happened when we saw *Shadow Of The Beast*. Yves had been playing in his head with this idea of bypassing the two playfield hardware limit. We saw this as an opportunity to create visuals with more depth than ever."

For *Agony*, the team managed to introduce three layers of parallax scrolling, creating a remarkable sense of distance ▶

MASTERING AGONY

USE THESE TIPS TO BECOME TOP OWL

HUNT DOWN POTIONS

Our heroic owl Alestes uses echolocation to obliterate the nightmarish creatures blocking his path. That power is weak when you start the game, but by collecting green potions that certain enemies drop, your echo-arc will grow wider and stronger.

LIVE BY THE SWORD

Another important power-up mechanic in *Agony* comes in the form of a pair of mystical swords that float above and below you. Gathering these blades will grant you a massive advantage as levels progress, striking down creatures on your periphery.

PUT A SPELL ON YOU

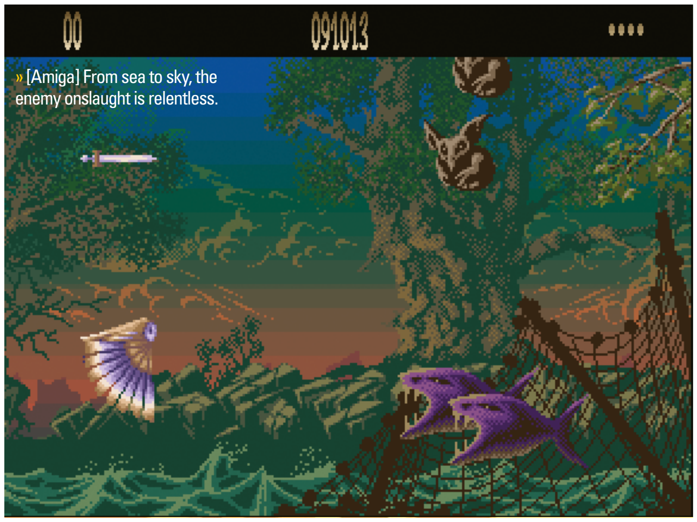
Scrolls add powerful spells to your inventory. Find them on the spell selection screen by pressing the space-bar. Try a Rotating Fireball for a protective circle of flames, or a Time-Freeze spell that halts enemies in their tracks.

BE EVASIVE

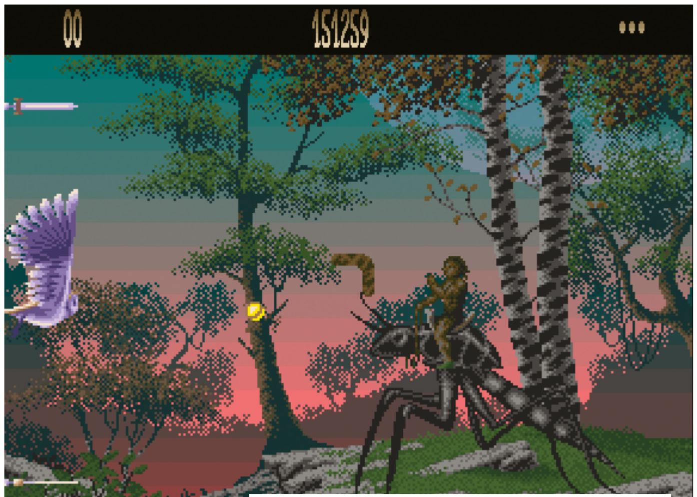
As the game builds in intensity, attempting to destroy everything on-screen becomes a futile pursuit. Concentrate on clearing a path through the chaos. Repeat plays give you a sense of which enemies to kill, and which to dodge.

USE DARK MAGIC

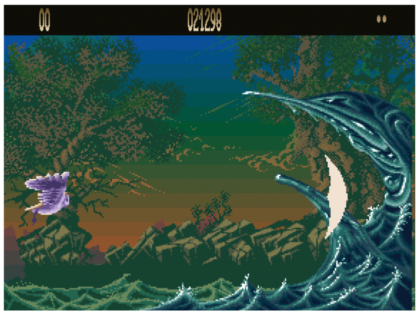
If all else fails (and let's face it, *Agony* is tough) you can always cheat. Typing 'fantasy' during the introduction will let you use the function keys for power-ups and extra lives, or the return key to skip a level.



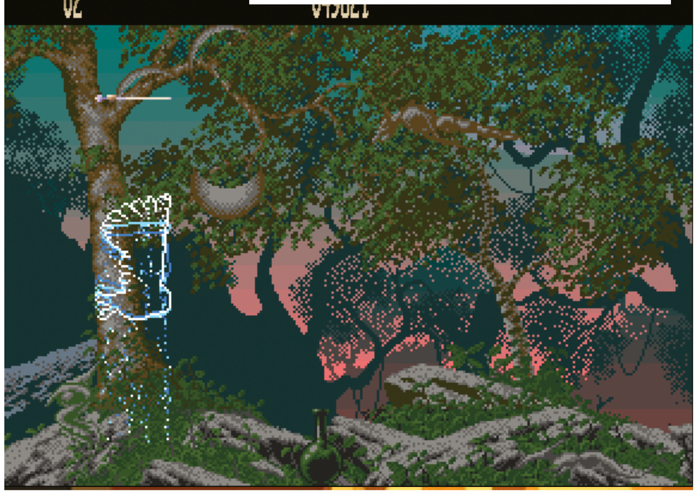
» [Amiga] From sea to sky, the enemy onslaught is relentless.



» [Amiga] Riding a giant insect while wielding a boomerang, this boss is pretty unique.



» [Amiga] On losing a life your owl fades to a beautiful blue outline for a while.

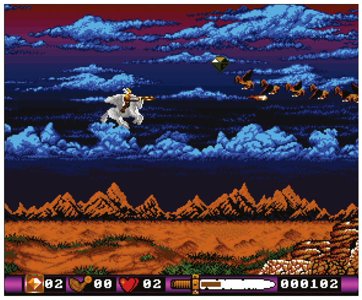


FANTASTIC BEASTS…

AND WHERE TO PLAY THEM ON THE AMIGA

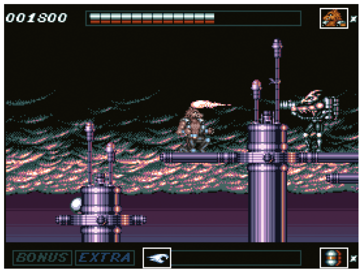
PEGASUS

Featuring the Greek mythological hero Perseus and his trusty flying horse Pegasus, this Gremlin Graphics creation alternates between side-scrolling shooter and hack-and-slack platformer. Parallax scrolling, smooth animation and gorgeous backgrounds create several similarities with *Agony*.



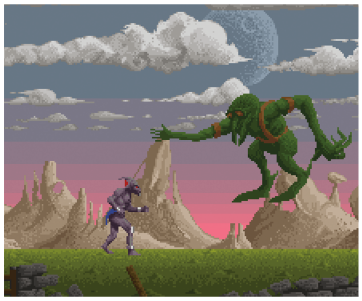
WOLFCHILD

Before ushering Lara Croft into the world, Core Design gave us the chance to play as a werewolf in the lively sci-fi fantasy platformer *Wolfchild*. Originally released on the Amiga, it also appeared on Master System, Mega Drive and Super Nintendo.



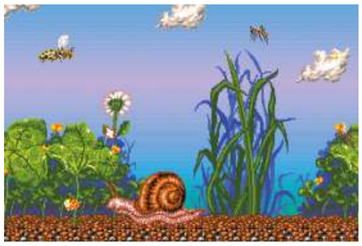
SHADOW OF THE BEAST

An inspiration for *Agony*, the 1989 Psygnosis classic pit players as an unspecified beast exploring a hostile land filled with puzzles and wild and wonderful creatures. It would spawn two sequels and a 2016 high-definition reboot for PlayStation 4.



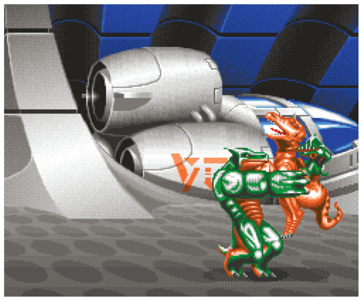
APIDYA

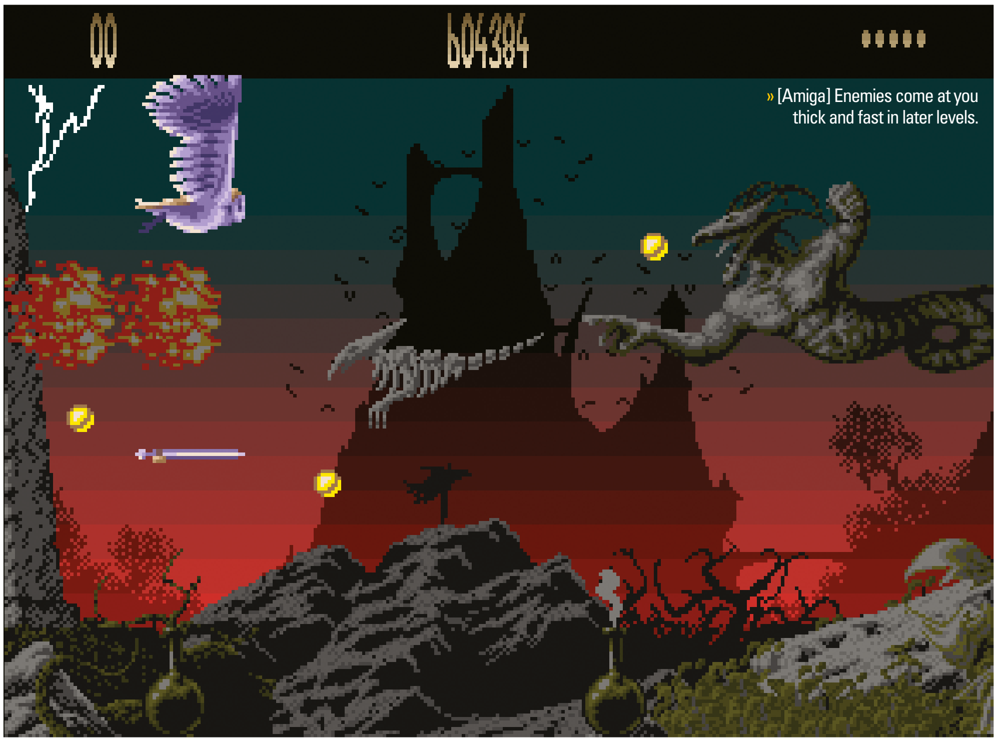
Take to the skies as a killer bee, in a game that, much like *Agony*, sees a magician inhabiting a winged beast to seek vengeance. Brilliantly bright graphics, solid gameplay and a unique garden setting earned *Apidya* rave reviews in 1992.



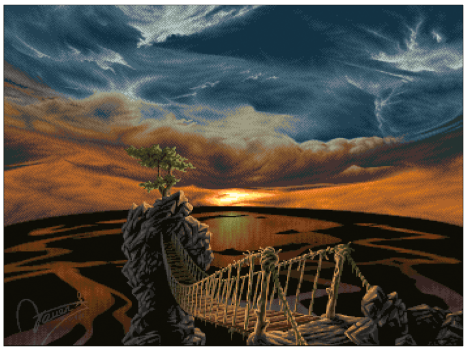
BODY BLOWS GALACTIC

This fighting game, published late in the Amiga era, may not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think of otherworldly creatures. But what other game allows you to fight a dinosaur, playing as a dragon, aboard a spaceship?





» [Amiga] Enemies come at you thick and fast in later levels.



and pushing the boundaries of Amiga graphics at the time. As your owl dodged bullets and attacked enemies using echolocation and spells, these scenes would unfold over a deep background plane, a middle plane (including some animated elements, such as waves and waterfalls) and a foreground plane. On top of this were numerous detailed sprites, including falling rain and enemy bullets. It was a huge technical feat and Franck believes it was a significant part of the praise the game received on release.

Agony's graphics were not only technically impressive, but hauntingly atmospheric, with a striking gothic style. Franck illustrated a series of stunning loading screens for the start of the game and the prelude to each level, showing a variety of mythical creatures dwelling in stark natural landscapes. Franck cites several influences that helped to shape this artistic style. "Paper Tiger publishing had this extensive collection of fantasy art books at the time. I had a bunch of those and took a lot of inspiration from them. *Dungeons & Dragons* art books were also very influential, as well as 19th century romantic painters of the Hudson River School such as Albert Bierstadt. On the movie side, I'd like to mention Jim Henson and *The Dark Crystal* for its detailed and rich aesthetics, and also *Willow*."

The team knew they wanted to create six levels for the game, each with a distinct natural setting, from a roaring sea to a murky swamp and fiery castle ruins. Franck says the division of labour in achieving this array of levels was quite straightforward. "Because Marc and I were working remotely, we would simply split the game into two distinct sets of levels so that there would not be any dependencies." Meanwhile, Yves would work on the coding and implementing gameplay mechanics. The relatively smooth development process was also supported by Steve and Psygnosis allowing the team to work with autonomy and freedom, something that Franck says he still greatly appreciates to this day.

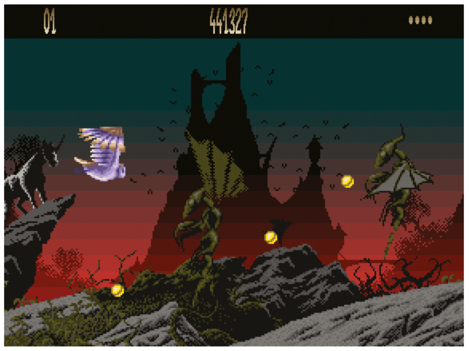
"IN THE END, I OFFERED THE SOLUTION OF PURCHASING A LICENCE FOR $1 SO LONG AS THEY ACKNOWLEDGED THE ORIGIN OF THE SONG"

TIM WRIGHT

Franck and the developers knew that *Agony* would need standout music to create the immersive atmosphere they imagined. Welsh composer Tim Wright, also known as CoLD SToRAGE, was one of several talented musicians brought on board with help from Steve to achieve this. Tim would create an unforgettable piano track for the introduction of the game. "I'd established quite a good working relationship with Psygnosis from the late-Eighties onwards," he tells us. "By the time *Agony* came along, I had provided music for games such as *Awesome*, *Lemmings* and *Shadow Of The Beast II*, so my skills were improving along with my catalogue. *Agony* was interesting in terms of audio, I would go so far as to say quite unique at that time, because the music was provided by a who's who of Amiga talent from back in the day." Jeroen Tel and Allister Brimble were among the other well-known names who contributed to the soundtrack.

Franck and Steve envisaged a classical style to the main title music of the game, rather than the conventional electronic sounds of the time. They gave that steer to Tim, who then set to work. "My introduction track was developed in two parts," Tim remembers. "A kind of melancholic beginning that implied the torture and struggle of the game ahead. But then there is a brief pause, and a much more positive melody comes to the fore for the second part, before concluding the piece with a reprise of the first theme. This central, more uplifting melody was composed with a firm vision of Indiana Jones in my mind: an adventurer with great skills taking on a massive challenge, but totally acing it.

"Upon hearing and loving the track, Franck Sauer told me that he had some much-better piano samples available, and he asked if he could use those instead. That sounded like a great idea, so I agreed unreservedly." The better-quality samples meant the Amiga couldn't quite hit some of the higher notes of the piece, so



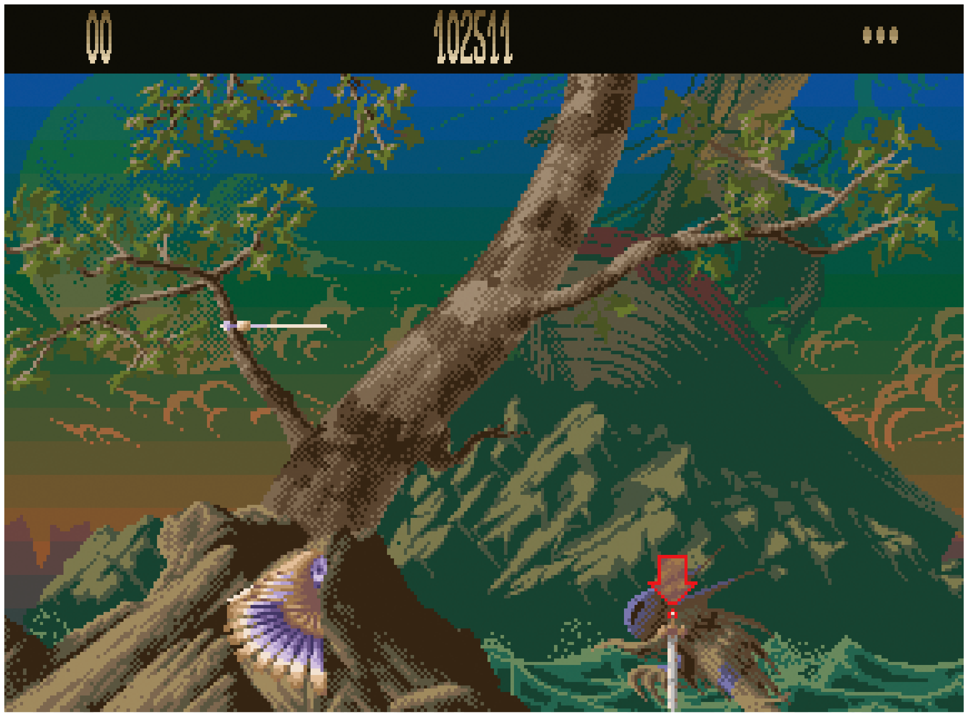
Franck transposed the unplayable notes down an octave to make them work. "This changed the feel of the song for me, and sounded odd to my ears," Tim admits. "But for everyone else it's the only way they know it. It is what it is, and I think it's interesting that there's an original version and an in-game version."

Tim's track would prove so influential that many years later, it would end up at the centre of a copyright dispute, albeit one that never saw legal action. The 2005 song *Sorgens Kammer* by Norwegian metal band Dimmu Borgir included some undeniably familiar piano work. After being alerted by a fan of his, Tim contacted the band's management, which Tim says pointed the finger of blame at a keyboard player who had recently left the group. Tim even reached the point of seeking advice from a music lawyer. "In the end, I offered the solution of purchasing a licence for $1 so long as they acknowledged the origin of the song. [The band's management] refused but reissued the album without the song. It was kind of petty and unnecessary really, as their fans seemed to like the old version of the album. The net result was more publicity for me, and more than likely, it has added to the lore and mystery around the track, so all's well that ends well."

> "I AM GLAD TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT, BUT I THINK ALL CREDIT MUST GO TO THE TEAM"
> **STEVE RIDING**

While the title and high-score pieces composed by Tim are calm and reflective, the in-game music by Jeroen Tel is bombastic and intense. This creates a real sense of urgency as you fight through the levels, in a similar vein to the sinister orchestral soundtrack to *Dark Souls'* boss fights that can easily raise your blood pressure a notch or two. It actually creates an interesting counterpoint to the more tranquil main theme.

Achieving such a technically proficient game was challenging, and at least one significant compromise had to be made. A standout part of *Shadow Of The Beast* that Franck and the team had admired was its animated introduction sequence. They prepared an equivalent for *Agony*, telling the backstory of a bitter rivalry between two wizard's apprentices, the better of whom would transform into an owl to give chase and retrieve a stolen spell. Even before accounting for this introduction though, the game was already three disks long. Adding the animation at the beginning would have added a fourth. For Psygnosis, that was one disk too many for the game. The introduction was cut, leaving only a few words of scene-setting text on the introduction screen. Another challenge, later in development, was that their sole coder Yves Grolet was called to complete his national military service, which Franck recalls leading to some slowdown in production.

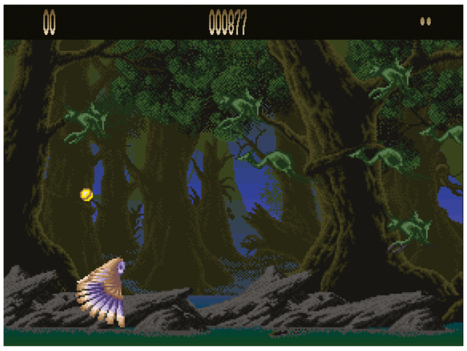


» [Amiga] Arrows guide the way through the chaos to swords and item pick-ups.

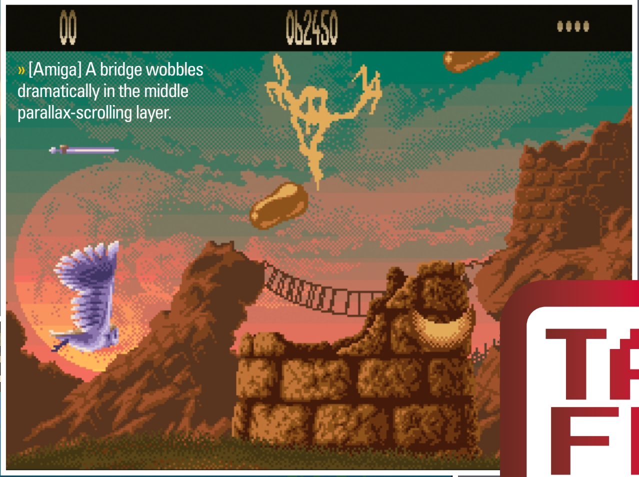
When *Agony* was released in 1992, it gained huge admiration for its visuals and soundtrack. *Amiga Action* lauded the game for "raising the standards of in-game graphics to a new level", while *Amiga Format* called Tim's piano introduction "a work of art". The fast-paced gameplay also had its fans, but it would prove slightly more divisive among critics. Some cited the difficulty of later levels as too tough, while others argued that including more than six levels would have been an improvement. "Overall, the reviews were positive," Steve says, "especially with regards to the art style and music. So I was very pleased with the result. I am glad to have been involved with the development, but I think all the credit must go to the team." Boxed copies of the game fetch high prices among Amiga game collectors these days and are highly sought after. "I guess I should check my loft for copies," Steve ponders on hearing this.

Agony was released at a point not long before the Amiga market would begin to wind down. Foreseeing that this was going to happen, the members of Art & Magic would move on to concentrate on arcade games after *Agony* was released. Franck and Yves would go on to develop the revered 1999 PC open-world game *Outcast*, which was remastered in 2017 and has a sequel on the way for latest-gen machines soon. Marc Albinet would eventually find himself returning to Ubisoft as a director for *Assassin's Creed: Unity* and he later moved to Techland as a director for *Dying Light*.

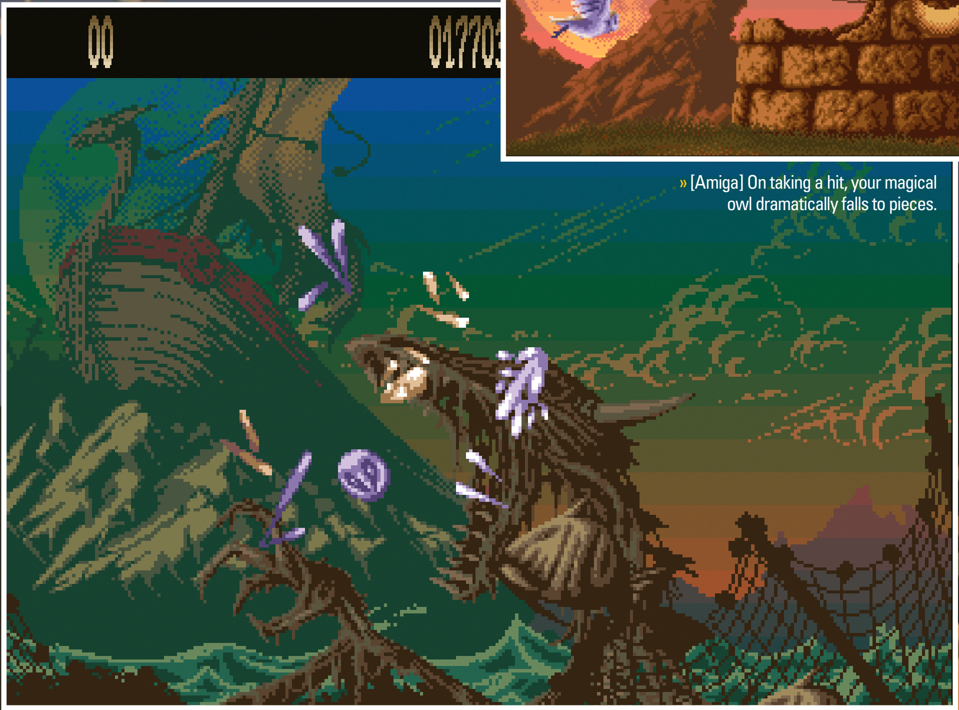
With *Agony* still gaining plenty of attention from fans, Franck and Yves have released all of the development files online in recent years, essentially meaning the game is now freeware. Franck is rightly gratified by how well-respected the game is 30 years later. "I think some of our naive decisions ended up making this game special and [helped it] stand out from the crowd. So maybe that was not that bad after all. Couple that with the freedom we had designing a product that was truly ours (we need to thank Steve and Psygnosis for that) and I'm really proud of having been part of a wonderful adventure that many still enjoy." ★



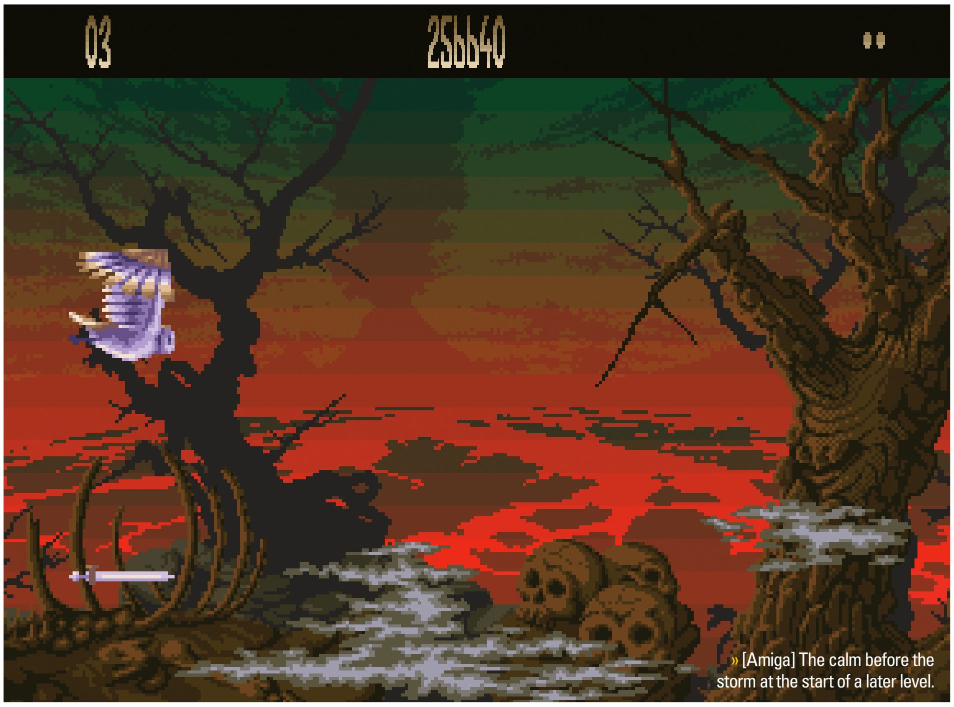
» [Amiga] Each stage of the game has a distinct setting, like this dark and gloomy swamp.



» [Amiga] A bridge wobbles dramatically in the middle parallax-scrolling layer.



» [Amiga] On taking a hit, your magical owl dramatically falls to pieces.



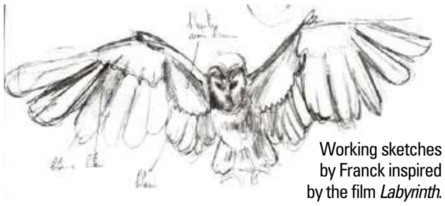
» [Amiga] The calm before the storm at the start of a later level.

TAKING FLIGHT

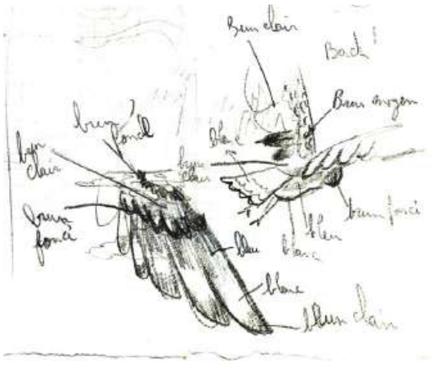
ANIMATING THE AGONY OWL

One of several graphical feats of note in *Agony* is the smooth, realistic animation of the creature you control. The motion of the wings looks almost picture perfect. So how did Franck achieve this effect? As well as sharing early sketches with us, Franck told us more about the process through which the iconic owl took flight. It all started with the Jim Henson movie *Labyrinth*, which featured a particular shot of an owl flying across the screen.

"I had *Labyrinth* on videotape. It was not possible to do frame-by-frame analysis or any type of rotoscoping techniques, because of the inability of my consumer-level VHS player to handle still images correctly. Instead, I played the sequence and played it again many times, so that I could study the movement of the owl. I used pencil and paper to take notes and draw basic shapes of the wing and body movements, so I would be able to plan how to sequence the animation. I then used Sculpt 4D on the Amiga to produce a crude animation of flapping wings. This allowed me to render the animation from the side and then import the animation into Deluxe Paint for painting the actual pixel content of the final images sequence."



Working sketches by Franck inspired by the film *Labyrinth*.



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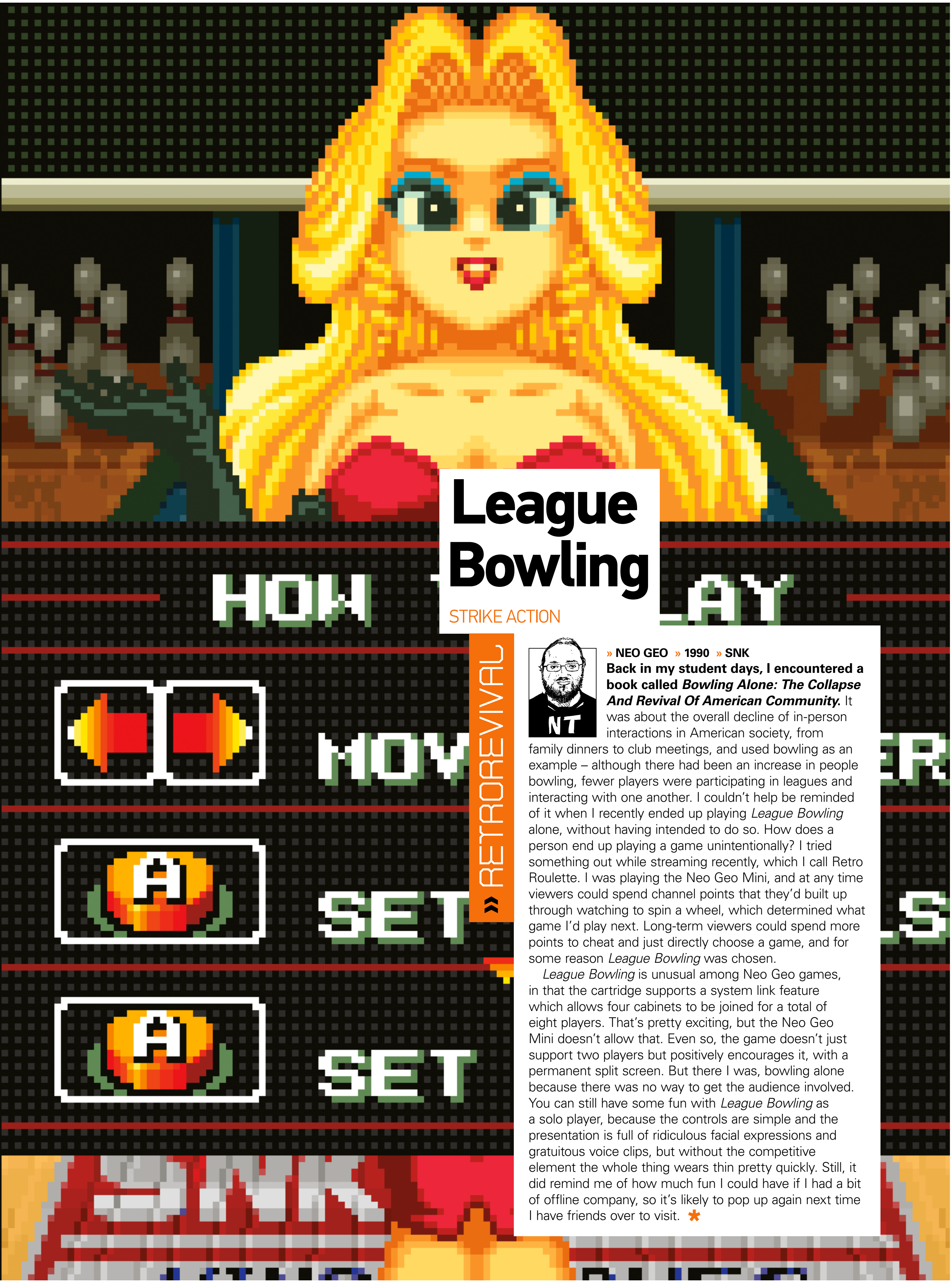


League Bowling

STRIKE ACTION

» NEO GEO » 1990 » SNK

Back in my student days, I encountered a book called *Bowling Alone: The Collapse And Revival Of American Community.* It was about the overall decline of in-person interactions in American society, from family dinners to club meetings, and used bowling as an example – although there had been an increase in people bowling, fewer players were participating in leagues and interacting with one another. I couldn't help be reminded of it when I recently ended up playing *League Bowling* alone, without having intended to do so. How does a person end up playing a game unintentionally? I tried something out while streaming recently, which I call Retro Roulette. I was playing the Neo Geo Mini, and at any time viewers could spend channel points that they'd built up through watching to spin a wheel, which determined what game I'd play next. Long-term viewers could spend more points to cheat and just directly choose a game, and for some reason *League Bowling* was chosen.

League Bowling is unusual among Neo Geo games, in that the cartridge supports a system link feature which allows four cabinets to be joined for a total of eight players. That's pretty exciting, but the Neo Geo Mini doesn't allow that. Even so, the game doesn't just support two players but positively encourages it, with a permanent split screen. But there I was, bowling alone because there was no way to get the audience involved. You can still have some fun with *League Bowling* as a solo player, because the controls are simple and the presentation is full of ridiculous facial expressions and gratuitous voice clips, but without the competitive element the whole thing wears thin pretty quickly. Still, it did remind me of how much fun I could have if I had a bit of offline company, so it's likely to pop up again next time I have friends over to visit. *

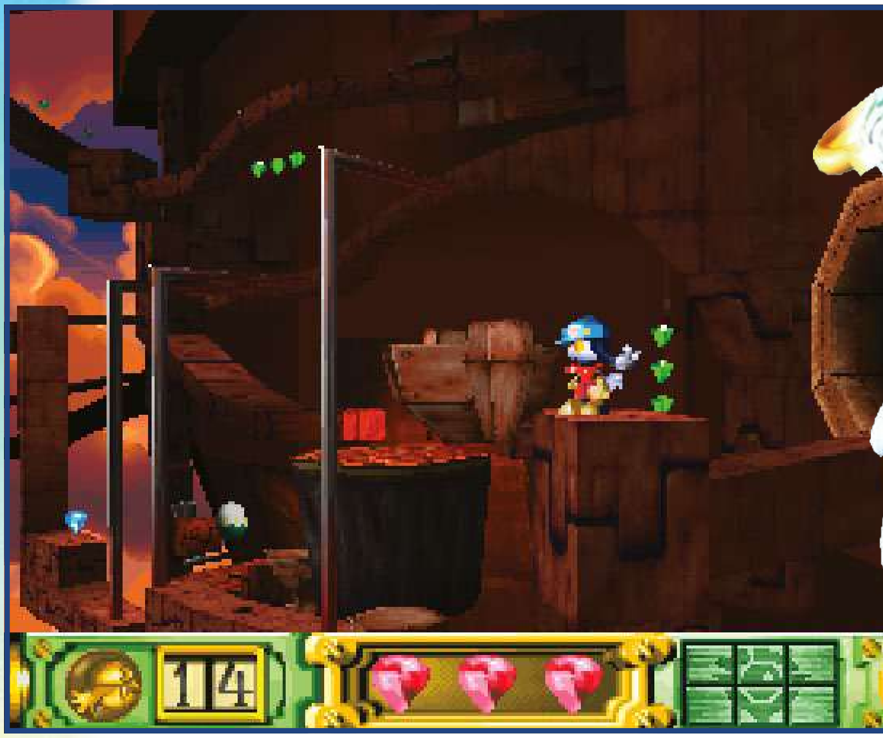
ULTIMATE GUIDE

KLONOA

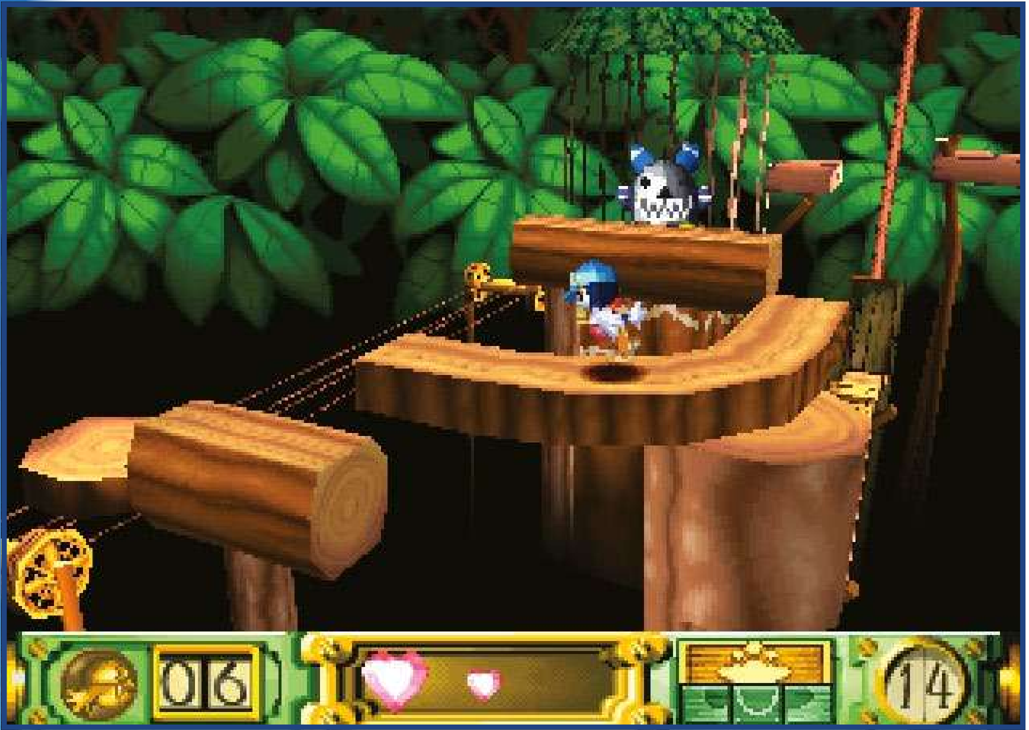
—Door To Phantomile—

A PLAYSTATION GAME WITH NOT JUST ONE, BUT TWO FULL REMAKES? IT'S LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A DREAM. SPEAKING OF WHICH… HERE'S A LOOK AT KLONOA: DOOR TO PHANTOMILE, JUST IN TIME FOR THE NEWLY RELEASED KLONOA PHANTASY REVERIE SERIES

WORDS BY STUART GIPP



» [PlayStation] Sometimes it can be tough to tell where to go next. Don't give up, Klonoa!

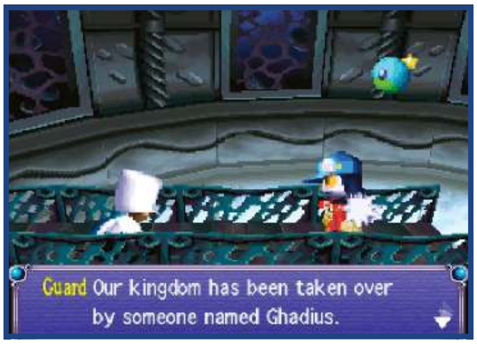


» [PlayStation] Levels bend and curve around themselves, adding a sense of depth to the adventure.

What exactly is Klonoa? He's a sort of cat/dog/Sonic The Hedgehog kind of thing – and he's got a little Pac-Man on his hat – but god knows he's a beloved (if mildly obscure) icon of the PlayStation era, with calls for his return being a constant fixture of the gaming community. Rejoice, then, for Klonoa has returned, and his first two adventures are now available as a two-part collection called *Klonoa: Phantasy Reverie Series*. It's a good excuse, if one is even necessary, to examine the enduring appeal of the PlayStation original, *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile*. It's a title originally encountered by many as a demo given away by the *Official PlayStation Magazine*, and pursued to the full version by an exceptional few.

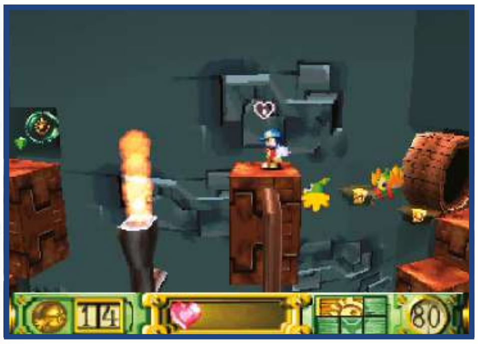
If you get *Klonoa*, it gets you, and it will hook you from the start with its absolutely charming presentation. There's a handmade-feeling about it all, a sense of tangibility, like you're watching a physical puppet show rather than just playing a game. From the initial crash landing that sees Klonoa and Huepow (his bright blue bestie) popping their heads out of the window to investigate, you feel right at home in the midst of a beautifully designed, richly drawn world. Even the between-stage save screen is unforgettable; so compelling, in fact, that the sequel reused its music wholesale.

While *Klonoa* is fundamentally a 2.5D platformer, the third dimension factors into every aspect of its craft. The stage layouts twist, contort and cross over one another, creating a convincing illusion of depth and freedom even within its relatively rigid pathways. While Klonoa and the majority of his opponents are two-dimensional sprites, the terrain and background decoration is all 3D, with a density of detail and use of colour that makes for something richer and more



Guard Our kingdom has been taken over by someone named Ghadius.

» [PlayStation] Blah blah blah… look, old man, the world's at stake here! Enough exposition.



» [PlayStation] There's an appealing density to the level design, with little wasted space.

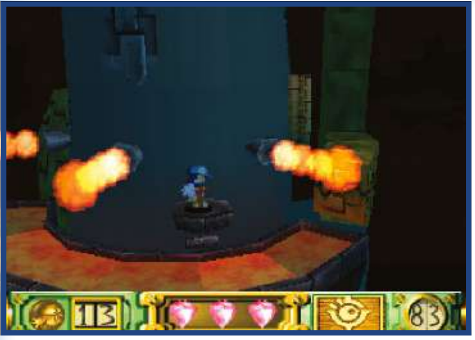
> "IF YOU GET KLONOA, IT GETS YOU, AND IT WILL HOOK YOU FROM THE START"

THE GREAT WII-MAKE

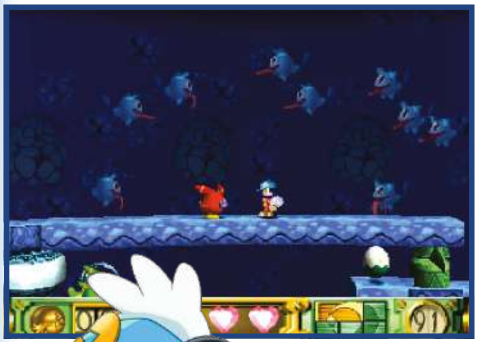
EXAMINING THE 2008 DOOR TO PHANTOMILE REMAKE

A remake of *Door To Phantomile*, retitled simply *Klonoa*, arrived to some fanfare on Nintendo's Wii back in 2008, just missing the original game's tenth anniversary. We won't hold that against it. What we will hold against it, though, is its inclusion of disgusting English voice acting that obliterates the charm of the original 'Phantomilian' which you can – thank god – switch back to in the menu. Outside of the bonus stages (more on those shortly), difficulty has been lowered across the board, with Klonoa now able to take a frankly ridiculous ten hits, up from the original six.

It's mostly the same game – as you'd expect, from a remake – but some new additions do sweeten the pie for long-time fans. Once you clear all the Visions, you'll unlock Reverse mode. At first, this seems like a standard, somewhat pointless mirrored replay of the game, but that's not entirely true. Within each Reverse mode stage is a hidden portal that warps you to a challenge room, each of which are harder than anything in the main game, and by some distance. As well as these bragging rights stages, you're also able to dress Klonoa up in different costumes (including his *Klonoa 2* duds) using the gems you'll find in each stage.



» [PlayStation] This moving platform flies right in the path of those flame jets. Be careful or you'll be toast!



» [PlayStation] Oh yes, *Door To Phantomile* is also extremely frightening. See those ghosts?

atmospheric than even the brilliant *Tombi* – most likely *Klonoa*'s closest rival on PlayStation.

As in *Tombi*, the action here is interspersed with puzzles, though the proceedings are breezier and less obtuse. Klonoa's Wind Bullet attack isn't just an offensive weapon, it's also a means of traversal – catching an enemy with it inflates them like a balloon and positions them over Klonoa's head, and with two taps of the jump button the enemy can be used as a makeshift 'spring' of sorts; Klonoa throws it downward and the force of the Wind Bullet launches him upward to higher ledges and hidden secrets. Klonoa's primary means of attack also utilises these captured enemies, flinging them forward with the Square button to take out anything in their path, break open eggs to reveal collectables, or forge a new path. These twin moves form the crux of every single challenge in *Door To Phantomile* – and mastering their many diverse applications is a major part of the fun.

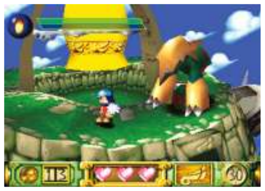
> "KLONOA'S WIND BULLET ATTACK ISN'T JUST AN OFFENSIVE WEAPON, IT'S ALSO A MEANS OF TRAVERSAL"

Exploitation of the third dimension is a large part of *Door To Phantomile*, and a significant source of enjoyment. Enemies can attack from behind; that is to say far away in the distance, or even the foreground. Attacking creatures in the background is something of an exact science, but as with all the major puzzles in the game you'll always have a supply of projectiles to deal with it – though the same can't necessarily be said for the metagames of rescuing the captured locals and grabbing all the gems in each area.

Each stage, or Vision hides six different innocents that Klonoa must rescue by popping the bubble or egg containing them with a Wind Bullet, or breaking it open with a thrown enemy. The game isn't a collect-a-thon, though – villagers aren't often especially difficult to find and the critical path is usually obvious. Perhaps in the late game you may find a particularly stubborn bubble lurking somewhere crafty, but by and large it's reasonably straightforward. The most significant challenge the game presents is the completely optional collection of all the green and blue gems, for a total of 150 per Vision. This would be difficult enough by itself, but there's a sneaky little catch to make things even trickier. One of the items you can find is a Mirror Spirit, a blue fairy that follows Klonoa and temporarily doubles the value of any gems he collects. These tend to be placed in such a way that there's a perfect 'line' you can take that'll absolutely maximise the number you receive, and you need to pull

BOSS RUSH

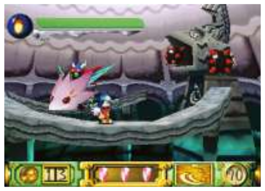
HOW TO TAKE DOWN PHANTOMILE'S IMAGINATIVE BOSSES



RONGO LANGO

■ This abstract-looking behemoth is intimidating, but ultimately a bit pathetic. It'll create shock waves and fires ring-beams at you, but nothing you can't handle. Easy peasy.

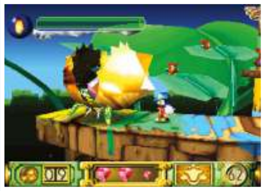
HOW TO BEAT THEM:
Mr Lango is extremely vulnerable to attacks from behind. Wait for him to leap over you, then throw an enemy directly into his rear end.



KING SEADOPH

■ King Seadoph attacks you with a bizarre fish thing called Cursed Pamela. He'll dismount in order to ride atop spiked balls that roll through the arena.

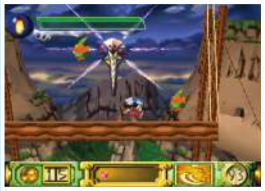
HOW TO BEAT THEM:
Grab King Seadoph from one of the spiked balls. When Cursed Pamela launches herself towards you, throw Seadoph into her so it hits her when in range.



GELG BOLM

■ This monstrous plant needs uprooting. Charge attacks, body-slams and a propensity for rolling giant apples at you make this boss unlikely to grow on you.

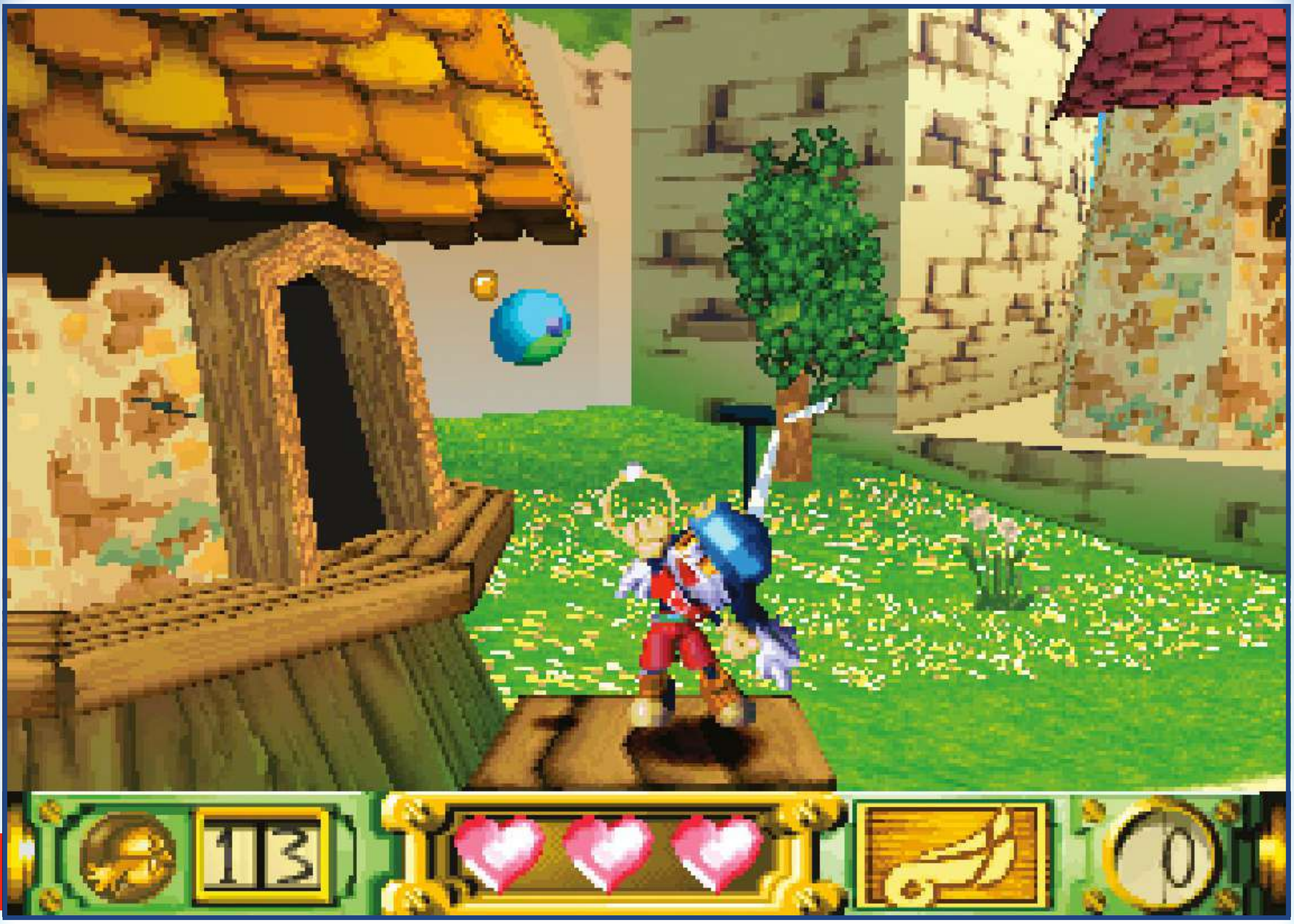
HOW TO BEAT THEM:
Air attacks are the order of the day – bounce off the handy springboards as Gelg approaches, then launch a Moo downwards to hit its vulnerable stamen.



BALADIUM

■ This beastie is fought on a precarious, swinging platform, beset by enemies. It'll summon bizarre crystals that you'll need to dodge backwards AND forwards.

HOW TO BEAT THEM:
Baladium is easy to take down. Just grab a Flying Moo as you swing away from the boss, then throw it at its colourful scales on the return trip. See ya!



» [PlayStation] Klonoa absorbs Huepow into his ring. Stop your giggling at the back.

JOKA

■ Finally, a face-off with Ghadius' simpering sidekick – only he's not the pushover you'd expect. This horrible harlequin has tricks up his lack of sleeves.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Throw enemies into the background to hit his face. When he transforms, you'll need to turn the ground yellow in order to get another shot in.

GHADIUS

■ While Ghadius is definitely imposing, he's actually a lot easier to beat than Joka. His battle takes place both inside and atop a giant ring.

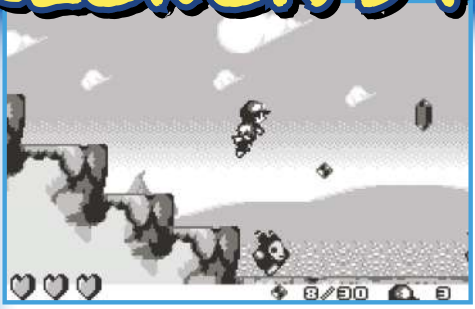
HOW TO BEAT THEM: Stay on the lower level while running around and grabbing enemies, then just throw them into Ghadius. If you get warped up to the top, simply warp back down again. Not too tricky really.

NAHATOMB

■ No less than three forms of this nightmarish final boss await you, and only the second is fought directly. Hope you stocked up on extra lives.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: For his first form, throw an enemy to each cannon. Second, throw enemies at the glowing gems. Finally, throw enemies downward into the cannons again.

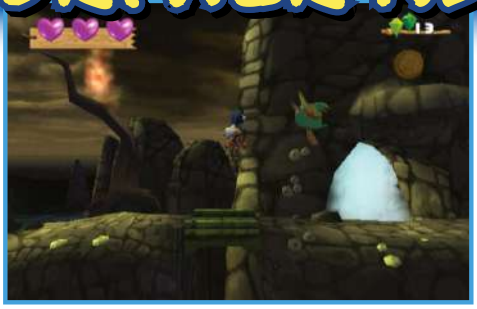
KLONOA'S FURTHER ADVENTURES



KAZE NO KLONOA: MOONLIGHT MUSEUM

SYSTEM: WonderSwan **YEAR:** 1999

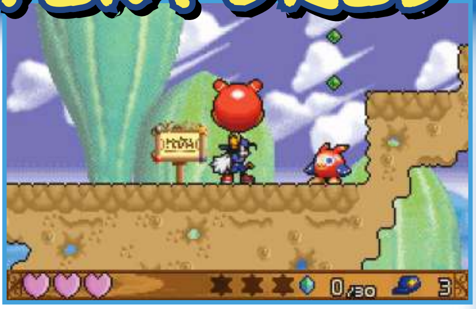
This first follow-up never left Japan, sadly – and nor did its host hardware – but it can be considered something of the prototype for the Game Boy Advance games that followed. *Moonlight Museum*'s puzzle platforming gameplay is a spot-on translation of the original *Klonoa*'s style and feel.



KLONOA 2: LUNATEA'S VEIL

SYSTEM: PlayStation 2 **YEAR:** 2001

A beautifully cel-shaded sequel, what *Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil* offers is essentially more of the same, with additional PS2-powered spectacle. There's a heavier focus on the story this time around, and a melancholy feel to the proceedings. While it doesn't exceed the original, it is certainly worth playing.



KLONOA: EMPIRE OF DREAMS

SYSTEM: Game Boy Advance **YEAR:** 2001

Taking *Moonlight Museum*'s ball and running with it, *Empire Of Dreams* is a gorgeously minimalist and wonderfully designed puzzle platformer that's one of the brightest hidden gems in the Game Boy Advance's library. There are a few too many auto-scrolling stages, but it remains an absolute must-play on your handheld.

Q+A WITH RYO ISHIDA

KLONOA'S PRODUCER DISCUSSES UPDATING THE PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

What led to the franchise' resurrection in *Klonoa Phantasy Reverie Series*?

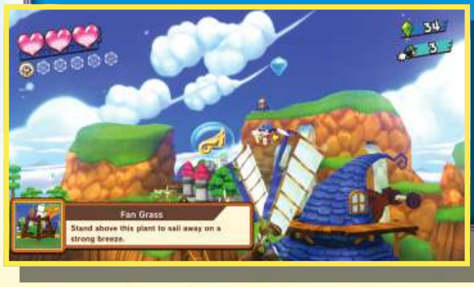
This time, as *Klonoa* is reaching its 25th anniversary, we are celebrating by welcoming it once again and we revived it as a remastered version since there has been some radio silence for the franchise.

How has *Klonoa Phantasy Reverie Series* been adapted/modified to meet modern visual standards?

When porting and remastering a retro game in the current era, of course a handful of optimisations are needed. For example, graphical enhancements are definitely needed. I could not list them all out, but one of the challenges we had was with the stage lighting and we have put our utmost efforts into meeting it with modern visual standards while keeping the original mood of the game.

What do you think the series is so loved?

I personally think that the unpredictable and dramatic stories are what made *Klonoa* so beloved for many years. Without exceptions, for both *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile* and *Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil*, players could experience an ending beyond imagination. I myself was also one of the players that was fascinated by both stories. On the other hand, the appearing characters in both games are also very appealing, and with the fun and unique gameplay they work like a charm which made a lot of fans fall in love with the series.



Fan Grass

Stand above this plant to sail away on a strong breeze.

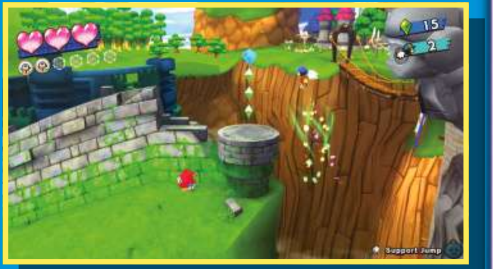
The original *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile* was already remade for Nintendo's Wii in 2008. How does this version differ from it?

The original *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile* in *Klonoa Phantasy Reverie Series* is a remastered version fundamentally based on the Wii version. Although the gameplay and presentations remain similar, Klonoa's body proportions and other minor UI changes have been made. Of course the remastered version is not all derived from the Wii version, we have drawn elements from BOTH the PlayStation and Wii versions to combine and create a new remastered version.

***Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil* hasn't been seen since the original PS2 version. Were there any particular challenges in bringing it to modern platforms?**

One of the many significant challenges that we had with remastering *Klonoa 2* is the adjustment of stage lighting. When porting the PlayStation 2 version of the game to the current-gen platforms, there was the problem of dim lighting in certain areas. You might think we could just increase the lighting of the whole area, but as we needed to also take care of preserving the intended atmospheres and mood in the original game, we put a lot of time and effort into adjusting those.

Were any of the original staff of either game involved with the new collection?



Director and art director for the original game, Kobayashi-san and Arai-san acted as advisors for the remasters of the two games.

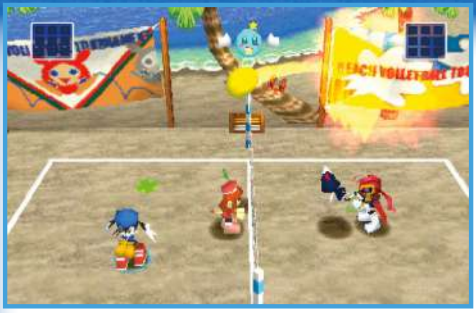
Have any extra features been added to the remakes?

There are a handful of new features that have been added. They include new tutorial messages (which you can toggle off to your liking), a pixelated-style filter for a more retro feel of a classic game, an RTA-related stopwatch function and such. These are new features we added which increase the quality of life and comfortability of the game, and at the same time do NOT affect the original gameplay experiences of the games.

Finally, is there any chance this new collection could lead to a full-fledged *Klonoa 3*?

We would like to first put our efforts into spreading the good word about *Klonoa*, and also earn support and new fans from the game community to make the series successful again. Who knows, but one day maybe we could probably propose internally for a new instalment of *Klonoa*! Once again, thank you everyone for your overwhelming support!

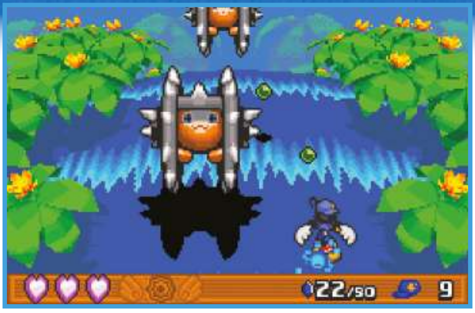
A LOOK AT KLONOA'S OTHER ESCAPADES



KLONOA BEACH VOLLEYBALL

SYSTEM: PlayStation **YEAR:** 2002

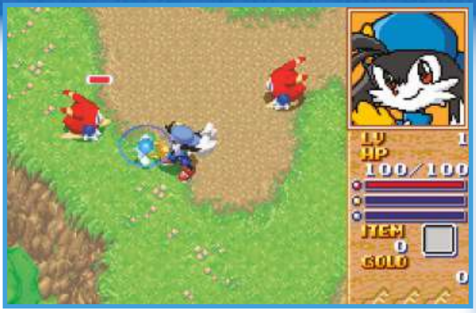
It's Klonoa, and he's playing beach volleyball with all his friends (and foes). No, we don't know why this exists either. It plays a decent game of the sport, but *Klonoa* isn't exactly known for its extensive roster of characters, nor for its beach volleyball. Still, it's nice to see them all in a different setting for a while.



KLONOA 2: DREAM CHAMP TOURNAMENT

SYSTEM: Game Boy Advance **YEAR:** 2002

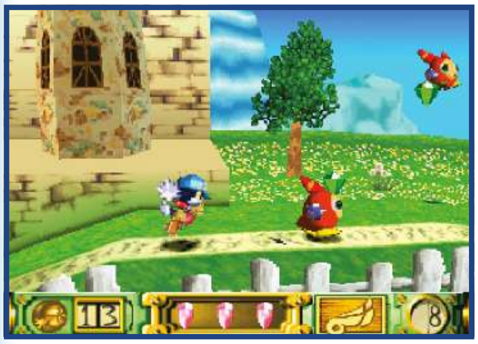
A fairly direct follow-up to *Empire Of Dreams*, this title sees Klonoa participating in a tournament whose rules just happen to coincide with his usual platform-puzzler antics. Funny, that. The game also introduces the unfortunately named bounty hunter Guntz. More of the same, but it's good.



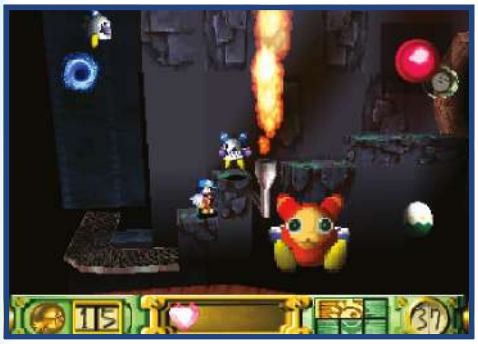
KLONOA HEROES: DENSETSU NO STAR MEDAL

SYSTEM: Game Boy Advance **YEAR:** 2002

This top-down action RPG was never officially localised, though a fan translation exists. Obviously a huge departure from the series' usual fare, *Klonoa Heroes: Densetsu No Star Medal* is fitfully enjoyable but doesn't hold attention for the ten or twelve hours it'll last. Weak, but not terrible at all.



» [PlayStation] Your basic fodder enemy, you'll be throwing a lot of these Moos at other Moos.



» [PlayStation] A Moo photobombs Klonoa in one of the later levels. Rude much?

> "A GAME THIS SHORT HAS TO BE PRETTY DAMN SPECIAL TO STICK IN PEOPLE'S MINDS THIS LONG, TO BE PLAYED AND REPLAYED OVER AND OVER AGAIN FOR DECADES"

▶ this off in order to get that full complement of precious stones. Mess up and you'll need to throw Klonoa into the nearest pit if you want another go at a perfect run.

More so than many platform games, *Klonoa* has a compelling storyline running through it – one that's quite tricky to describe the impact of without spoiling crucial details. It's a (generally) light-hearted thing, with Klonoa and Huepow undertaking their search for a magical pendant with some very darling mid-stage cutscenes, fully-voiced in a partially nonsensical fake language, which only helps to enhance the immersion that *Door To Phantomile* exhibits in spades. It's rare for a 2.5D platformer like this to be so atmospheric while being so compartmentalised and traditionally 'videogamey' in its structure, but Klonoa's inaugural adventure somehow pulls it off. Said atmosphere is immeasurably enhanced by the soundtrack, a world-class effort of ethereal excellence from a comprehensive selection of composers. It's interesting how consistent the tone is given how many people worked on it, but nonetheless it complements the action perfectly, hummable and bouncy when it needs to be, slow-burning and entrancing elsewhere. It perfectly evokes the mood of each Vision you explore.

As much as *Klonoa* draws you in, it won't do so for long. Not in terms of your first time through the game, anyway. It's not a particularly lengthy game by any stretch of the mind – with two Visions per world and only six worlds, you could quite easily polish it off in a few hours if you applied yourself. Liberating all the captured villagers nets you an extra, super-difficult bonus stage, but that's still only 13 levels in total. A game this short has to be pretty damn special to stick in people's minds this long, to be played and replayed over and over again for decades, and it's a shame that games on PlayStation were popularly measured in terms of their playtime over many other factors. A cutesy side-on platformer that you can finish with 100% completion in four or five hours was a much harder sell in 1998, especially given games media's hostility towards 2D games on PlayStation back then.

It's therefore a real testament to *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile*'s remarkably immersive combination of jumping and thinking that players still flock to it to this day, still called for a re-release even after it had already had one, even after a full-on remake, all the way to now where the first game and – for the first time since its PS2 debut – its sequel, are finally available on all formats. With the series producer suggesting a new game may be possible if the new *Klonoa Phantasy Reverie Series* sells strongly enough, the never-ending hope of fans that one day *Klonoa*'s story will continue has been bolstered yet again. For these enthusiasts, *Klonoa*'s future is a dream they don't want to wake up from. ✱

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come

retro GAMER
ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBORS
ELDEN RING
THE MAKING OF NARC
MASTER SYSTEM GEMS TO COLLECT
ASTRO CITY MINI HANDS-ON

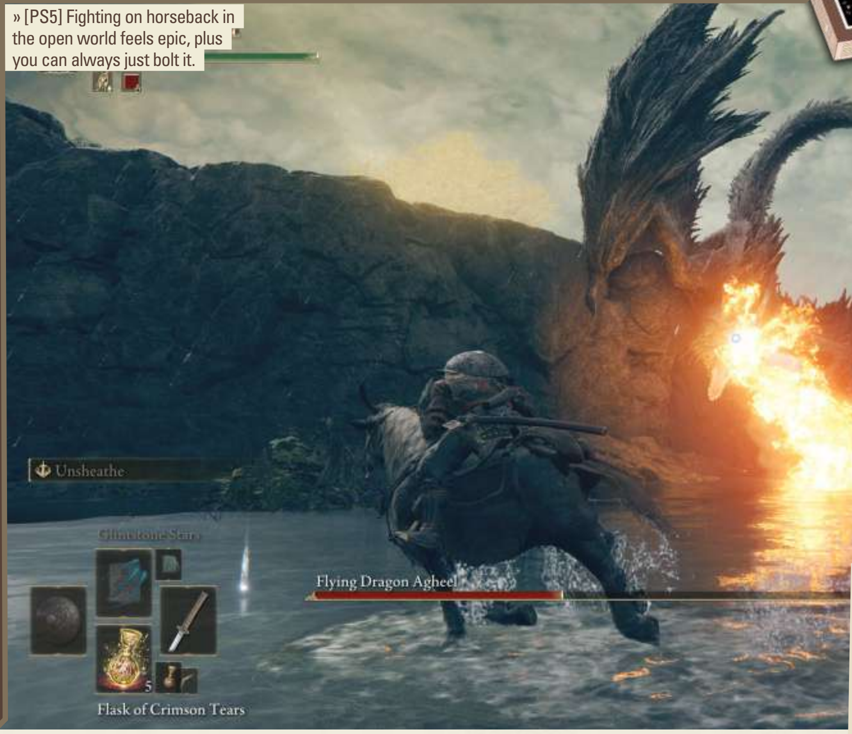
Info

- **» System:** PS5, PS4, Xbox Series X/S, Xbox One, PC
- **» Year:** 2022
- **» Publisher:** Bandai Namco
- **» Developer:** FromSoftware
- **» Key People:** Hidetaka Miyazaki, Yui Tanimura, George R R Martin

Go Deeper

» Given the significance of rings in the game's lore, rings are not equippable, though players can find talismans offering some similar perks.

» All demi-gods (eg Godfrey, Radhan, Melania) have names beginning with one of Martin's initials, though the author claimed it was a coincidence.



» [PS5] Fighting on horseback in the open world feels epic, plus you can always just bolt it.

Already revered for the influential Souls games that spawned their own sub-genre, FromSoftware was ready to cross over into the new frontier of open-world games and rewrite the rules as Elden Ring delivered the developer's vision of AAA game design

Words by Alan Wen

ELDEN RING

THE BACKGROUND

Having concluded the *Dark Souls* series in 2016 before following up with the Japan-set and more action-oriented *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice* in 2019, fans craving for a return to FromSoftware's twist on dark fantasy got their wish when the developer unveiled *Elden Ring* at E3 that same year, confirming its renewed partnership with *Souls* publisher Bandai Namco and as a collaboration with acclaimed fantasy novelist *Game Of Thrones* creator George R R Martin.

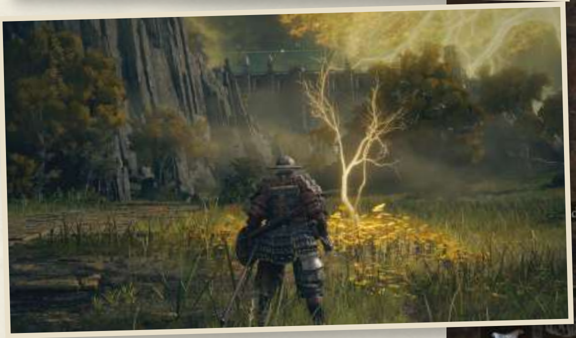
The cinematic teaser however left more questions than answers, which gave nothing away in terms of gameplay, although insider gossip hinted that it would be a departure from the claustrophobic labyrinthian design of the *Souls* games for a vast open world where you could fight on horseback.

Two years of feverish fan anticipation later and those rumours were confirmed in its gameplay premiere on Geoff Keighley's Summer Game Fest 2021 showcase before sweeping awards when it was shown off behind closed doors at Gamescom. Lucky fans didn't have to wait long either as a Closed Network Test was held across platforms that November. In just a tiny fraction of the game's open world, much like the demo for *The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild*'s Great Plateau, it was clear that FromSoftware had an ambitious game on its hands that wouldn't just surpass *Dark Souls* but, like Nintendo's 2017 masterpiece, also refresh AAA's tired open-world formula.

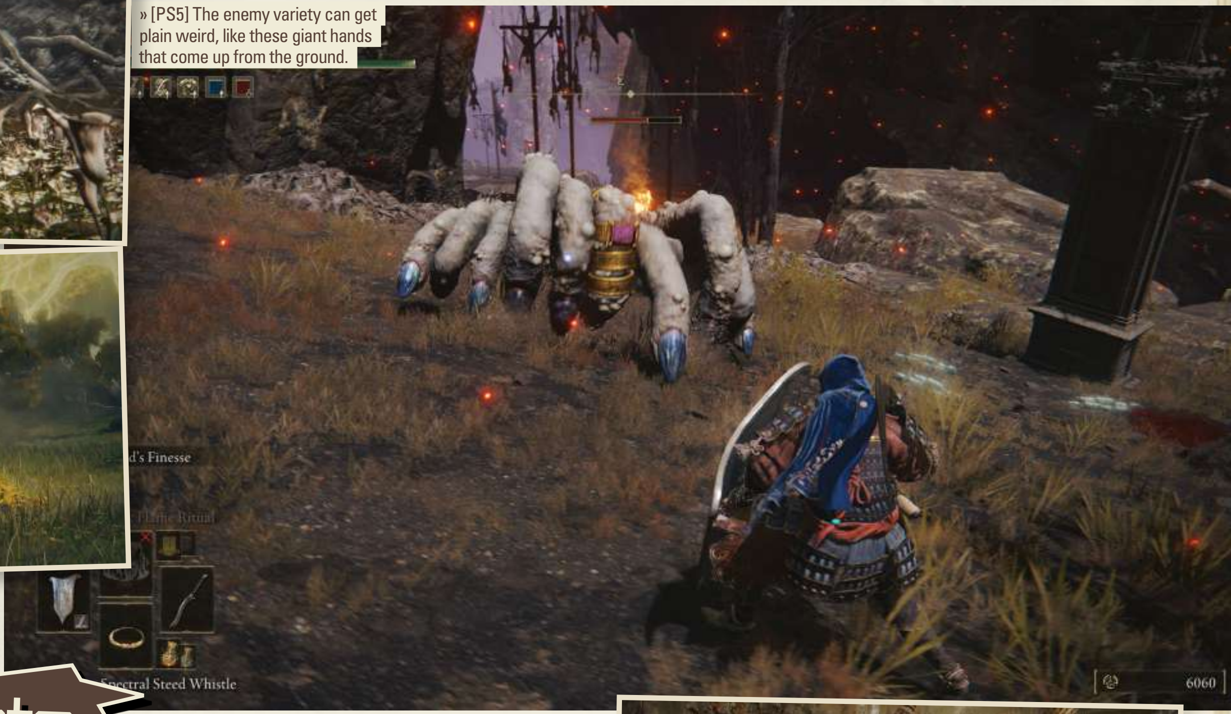
THE GAME

For some, *Elden Ring* is *Dark Souls 4* in all but name, and on the surface, that's quite accurate. Once again, you play as a custom avatar, referred to as the Tarnished, arriving to the Lands Between tasked with restoring the world following the shattering of the titular Elden Ring, with many obstacles to overcome, not least Miyazaki's masochistic love of poisonous swamps.

Yet while the *Souls* games gained a reputation for being impenetrably difficult, the 'git gud' philosophy a touch overplayed by some of the



» [PS5] Besides the Erdtree, minor trees and saplings also exist, the latter containing upgrades for your flasks.



» [PS5] The enemy variety can get plain weird, like these giant hands that come up from the ground.

fanbase, From designed this opus to be far more approachable. The open-world design is the main game changer, since you can actually pick and choose your battles rather than banging your head against a seemingly impassable opponent for hours, with many other smaller challenges available to help you level up and improve your build, made even easier with a ghost horse who can also double-jump or ride up gusts of wind.

It doesn't mean that the game takes it easy on you – certainly, towards the end, the dark Western fantasy trappings give way to a Japanese role-playing game structure of seemingly never-ending boss rushes. But for the most part, you'll find all manner of tools, be it unique weapons or spells that can become game-breakingly powerful, allies (human as well as AI-controlled) who can be summoned in to assist, and even a character who lets you respec so you're never completely locked into a build, all of which help make *Elden Ring* one of From's most flexible games ever.

The onus is however on you to discover these yourself (or otherwise peruse online), because in classic From fashion, little of the world is explained to you. Some concessions have been made, such as hint boxes that pop up whenever a new mechanic is introduced or how multiplayer has its own dedicated tab to make the process of summoning or invading other players a little less esoteric. Nonetheless, you won't find quest markers or a map filled with icons telling you what to do like in so many other open-world games. NPCs stand by in locations you might completely overlook, you won't know how formidable an opponent is until you choose to engage, and you'll be literally banging against walls in hopes of finding a hidden path.

From instead respects the player's intelligence and potential to solve their own problems as they endure whatever challenges are thrown at them on their journey to the majestic Erdtree that towers above everything else. But as the name suggests, it is the places between that most astound: whole cities hidden below and above, a hellscape to the east hosting a festival for warriors, and a completely secret tree gated off by a ghost town. Within these places you'll find tragic figures, schemers, diabolic pacts, each story uncovering another fragment of the game's vast lore that players are still piecing together. And of course there'll be ever greater challenges in your path to put you to the test.

» [PS5] As well as the dark fantasy theme, *Elden Ring*'s aesthetic is both majestic and tragic.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

If people were asking when open-world games would finally learn the lessons of *Breath Of The Wild*, then *Elden Ring* is the answer. It might not be a sandbox where a new ridiculous physics-based feat is being posted online, but its approach for not holding your hand, gating progress or steering you every step of the way makes it refreshing from its AAA rivals, immediately turning two other open-world games that same month into relics. Building upon and refining everything it has learned from *Dark Souls* to *Bloodborne* to *Sekiro*, it's not only From's towering opus but a game people will either be playing for years or stealing its best ideas from. *

Things of note

MAPS OUT

The first FromSoftware game with an in-game map, which only unveils itself once map fragments are found. It's also far bigger than it first appears.

MINI-DUNGEONS

The world is littered with small dungeons with worthwhile rewards. Tackling these and their mini-bosses are good warm-ups before taking on a Legacy Dungeon.

HOW BALD OF YOU

A recurring From character, cowardly scoundrel Patches returns as a merchant, though he'll also take the opportunity to boot you off a mountain if you're not looking.

SPIRITS, AWAY!

Instead of summoning other players when the going gets tough, you can obtain Spirit Ashes that let you summon AI-controlled characters. They can even be levelled up!

WITCH TIME

There's many NPCs with questlines you can take part in, or miss entirely. One of the best questlines involves Ranni The Witch, who first introduces herself as Renna, oddly enough.

THE MAKING OF

NOCTU

VAMPIRES AND ZOMBIES AND WEREWOLVES, OH MY! DON YOUR BEST TRENCH COAT, SHARPEN THOSE STAKES AND KEEP THE SILVER BULLETS HANDY: WE'RE DOING SOME SUPERNATURAL SLEUTHING TO UNCOVER THE MYSTERIES BEHIND THIS FORGOTTEN PC HORROR CLASSIC

WORDS BY JAMES DYSON

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS (NA)/TAKE-TWO INTERACTIVE (EU)

» **DEVELOPER:** TERMINAL REALITY

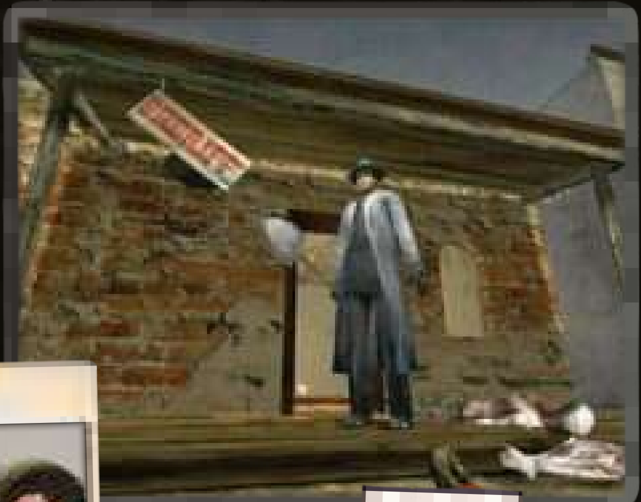
» **RELEASED:** 1999

» **PLATFORM:** PC

» **GENRE:** ACTION HORROR

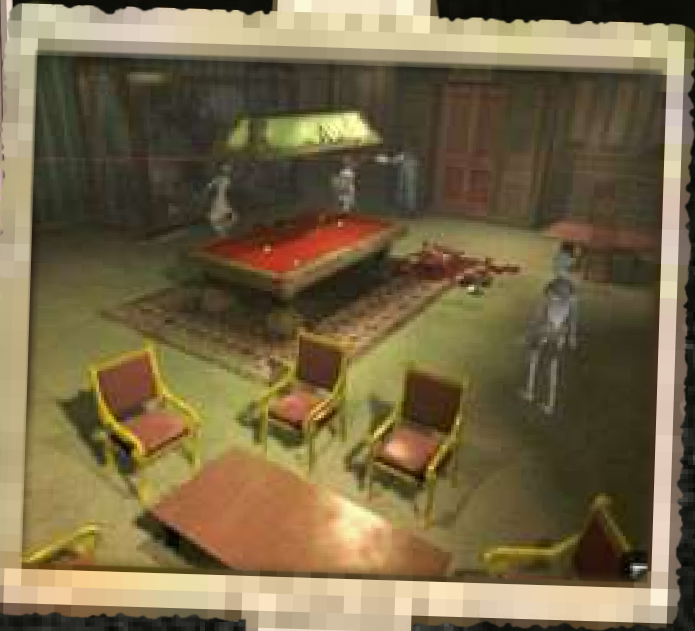
What happens if you combine the original *Resident Evil* with some old-timey pulp comics and the BPRD from *Hellboy*? Well, you'd probably end up with something similar to 1999's *Nocturne*. Created by Terminal Reality, *Nocturne* is an action survival horror game that puts players in control of the Stranger, a gun-slinging, fedora-sporting man of mystery working for the secretive Spookhouse. Set up under the auspices of Theodore Roosevelt, this clandestine extra-governmental body exists solely to find, study and, where necessary, combat possible supernatural threats to America. Following the Stranger across several supernatural cases, *Nocturne* mixes classic survival horror gameplay with puzzles, platforming and a heavy dose of gore-laden action.

Nocturne was Terminal Reality's first survival horror game. The company had been formed in 1994 in Lewisville, Texas by co-founders Mark Randel and Brett Combs, and had focused on flight combat and car racing games for Windows 95. However, Mark had developed an engine capable of rendering real-time lighting and cloth physics, and needed a game that would be able to show these features off to the fullest extent. Vehicular games of the sort Terminal Reality had worked on wouldn't cut it. Instead, the game would have to have detailed 3D environments and characters, although technology restraints meant that it would still require the use of a fixed-camera perspective. Given the emphasis on lighting, and Capcom's recent success with *Resident Evil* in 1996, a horror game seemed a natural choice. Mark turned to designer Drew Hayworth to flesh out the idea, who suggested a supernatural-



» [PC] As well as firearms, the Stranger can also pick up a variety of melee weapons.

» Jeff Mills, Joe Wampole and Mark Randall at Terminal Reality.



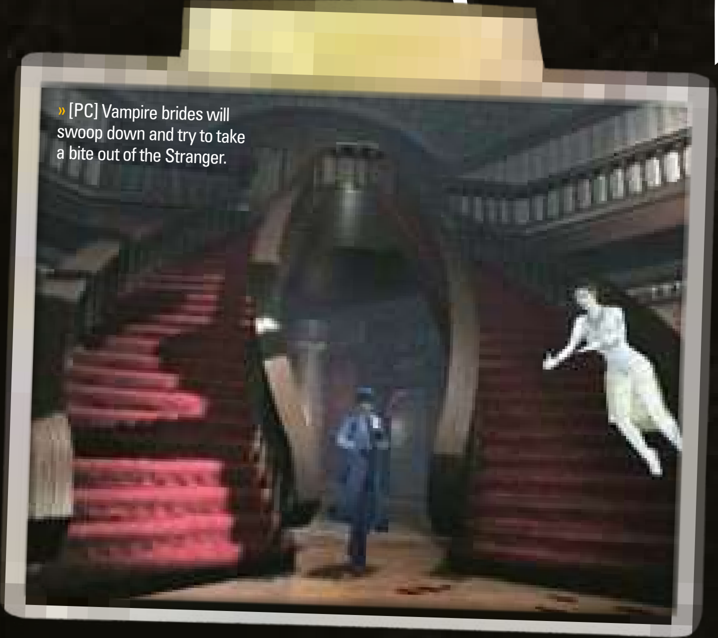
» [PC] It's the house of the dead! The Stranger's fourth assignment leads him to a manor filled with all manner of ghastly ghouls.

themed game inspired by film noir, pulp novels and classic Golden Age movie monsters. Thus was *Nocturne* born.

The majority of *Nocturne* follows the Stranger over the course of four assignments during the 1920s and 30s. It begins with a short level set in the Spookhouse HQ, introducing players to the game's basic mechanics and some of the other agents working for the organisation. From there, the four chapters can be played in any order, as each level is narratively unconnected to the rest. Chronologically, the first assignment takes place in 1927. This sees the Stranger joined by Dhampir and fellow Spookhouse agent Svetlana Lupescu as they travel to Germany to investigate a vampire-infested castle. The second assignment trades Gothic horror for a more *Night Of The Living Dead* approach, with some HP Lovecraft chucked in for good measure. This time, the Stranger finds himself in a backwater town in Texas in 1931, tasked with saving its few remaining inhabitants from a plague of flesh-eaters.

The game leans more heavily on its combat and puzzle elements in its third and fourth chapters respectively. In Windy City Massacre, the Stranger is called to Chicago in 1933, tasked with destroying an army of resurrected frankenmobsters controlled by Al Capone. The game's final assignment is set in 1935, and has the protagonist heading to France to uncover the mystery of a former Spookhouse agent's trap-laden mansion. A short concluding level unlocks upon beating all four assignments. The Stranger returns to the Spookhouse HQ to find many of its agents massacred and a cryptic message waiting for him, teasing a sequel that was never to come.

While *Nocturne*'s fixed cameras give it the appearance of a survival horror game, gameplay-wise it's much more akin to what would now be considered action horror. Ammo is plentiful and there's little in the way of inventory management, while backtracking and key-hunting takes a backseat to more linear level progression. Most notable are the player controls. Unlike the characters from *Resident Evil*, the Stranger can run and strafe while firing his weapons, and even has the ability to jump. The game also uses an auto-targeting feature, as well as laser sights on its guns to show where the Stranger is aiming. Most notable here is the Stranger's signature dual pistols, which can either be aimed at a single target or at two different enemies simultaneously for that badass guns-akimbo feeling. ▶



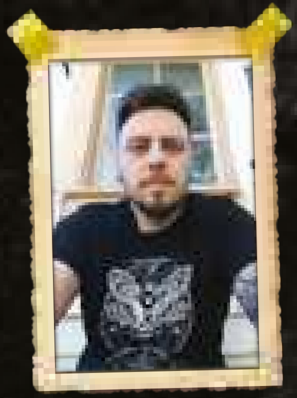
» [PC] Vampire brides will swoop down and try to take a bite out of the Stranger.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BLOODRAYNE
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION 2, GAMECUBE, PC, MAC
YEAR: 2003

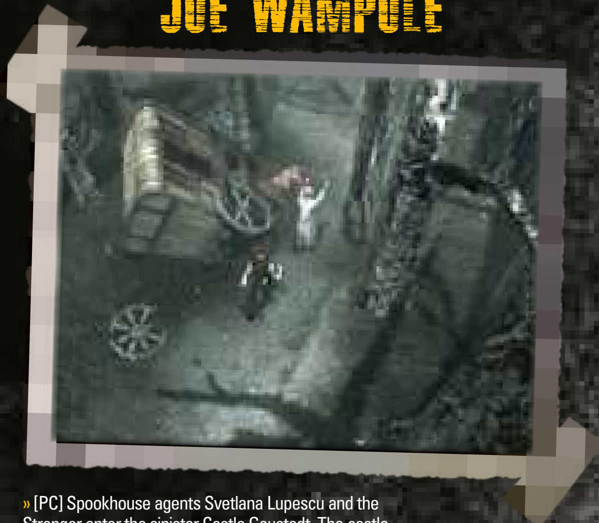
BLOODRAYNE 2
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, PC
YEAR: 2004

GHOSTBUSTERS: THE VIDEO GAME (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: PC, XBOX 360, PLAYSTATION 3
YEAR: 2009



» Joe Wampole worked part-time in a craft store before working on *Nocturne*.

> "IT WAS TOTALLY AN EFFORT OF BRUTE FORCE AND FIGURE IT OUT AS WE GO"
> JOE WAMPOLE



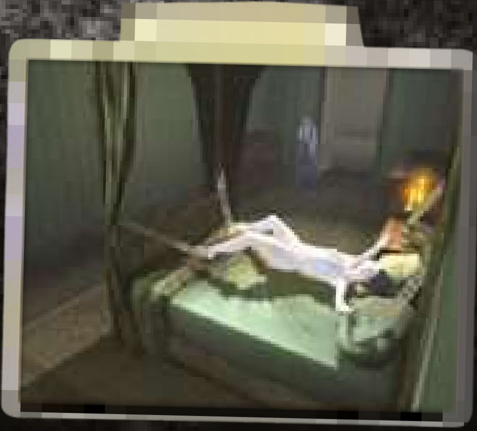
» [PC] Spookhouse agents Svetlana Lupescu and the Stranger enter the sinister Castle Gaustadt. The castle would later make an appearance in *BloodRayne*.

BOUND BY BLOOD

HOW NOCTURNE'S INFLUENCE CONTINUED IN BLOODRAYNE

Inspired by *Blade* and *The Matrix*, Terminal Reality had wanted to pursue a *Nocturne* sequel following Dhampir Spookhouse agent Svetlana Lupescu. Alas, by then Gathering Of Developers was no longer interested in publishing Terminal Reality's projects, so the company had to shop around. Majesco stepped up, but the contract stipulated that they'd own the IP for any games made under them. Wanting to retain the rights to *Nocturne*, Terminal Reality instead made *BloodRayne*, a 2002 action hack-and-slasher following Rayne, a vampire assassin tasked with stopping the Nazis from harnessing the power of the occult.

Bloodrayne shares a number of links with *Nocturne*. Rayne herself is heavily reminiscent of Svetlana (right down to her wrist-mounted blades), and even mentions that she has several half-vampire sisters, hinting at a possible family connection. She also works for the secretive Brimstone Society, which serves as more or less a straight stand-in for Spookhouse. More directly, one of the enemies she fights are the Daemites; creepy, Jacobs Ladder-inspired parasites encountered by Elspeth 'Doc' Holliday in *Blair Witch Volume 1: Rustin Parr*, and utterers of the memorable line, "I'll wear you like lederhosen!" Finally, both the German castle and the powerful vampire relic found in it in *Nocturne* appear in *BloodRayne*, effectively confirming a shared universe.



» [PC] Oh my! *Nocturne* wasn't above getting more than a little risqué at times. (Don't worry: it's a demon in disguise.)

▶ *Nocturne* can really only be understood within the context of the quasi-professional, quasi-experimental game development landscape of the mid-Nineties. This accounts both for its major strengths and its greatest shortcomings. At its core, *Nocturne* was an attempt to push gaming technology to new frontiers, as PR director Jeff Smith recalls. "The true power of Terminal Reality was always the graphics engine developed by Mark Randell and his in-house team," he explains. "[It had] amazing lighting effects, shadow and cloth simulations [that] really pushed the ability of most CPUs and graphics cards, and Mark worked daily with manufacturers to improve software and hardware. Mark is probably one of the most underrated graphics-programmers I have ever worked with."

> "IF YOU THOUGHT IT WAS COOL, YOU'D TRY TO MAKE IT WORK FOR THE STORY"
>
> MIKE PORTER

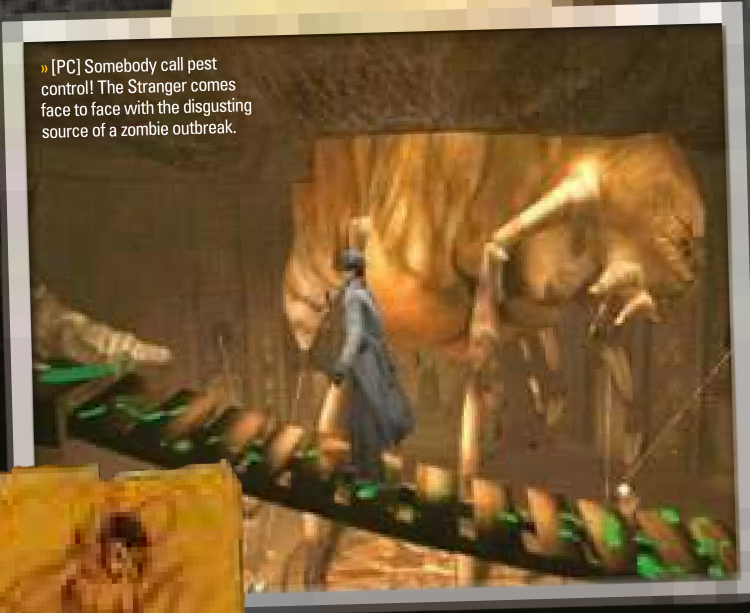
On the flipside, this singularly tech-led focus meant that every other aspect was designed in a very much seat-of-your-pants-style, in a manner that would likely be unthinkable in a similarly sized company today. Designer Joe Wampole's story of how he joined the team might make contemporary aspiring game professionals weep with envy, but it also offers an insight into the development culture of *Nocturne*. Joe had been working part-time at a craft store, and used to doodle in a sketchbook to stave off boredom. When someone from Terminal Reality happened to spot his drawings, he was offered a position as a concept artist. From there, he quickly became one of the main designers responsible for art, levels, story, gameplay and dialogue.

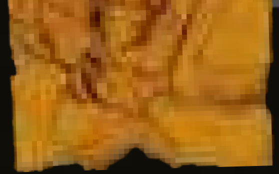
"When I came on board there was only a premise, some Spookhouse characters, and some bits and pieces for the game," he recalls. "It was basically a tech demo with a general idea and direction. There weren't any full levels, progression, objectives, etc. And they put an intern – me – with no prior experience to task designing about half of the game with [fellow designer] Jeff Mills carrying the other half. We collaborated on everything and busted our asses, but it was totally an effort of brute force and figure it out as we go."

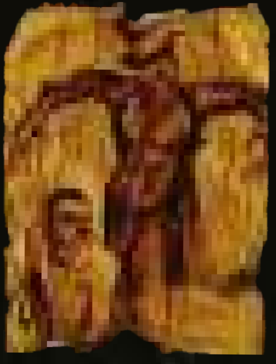
Environment artist Mike Porter tells a similar story. Mike had been looking to start out in the games industry as an artist, and had contacted Terminal Reality after playing its flight combat game *Terminal Velocity*. In the interview he was told that the company wasn't looking for artists, but was looking for level designers. Not knowing what that was, he immediately said he could do it. He was hired, and ended up working on level layouts and environment art for what became the castle assignment. "There wasn't much in the way of a design doc really. It was, 'Hey, here is this idea, come up with stuff that goes with this theme,'" he explains. "We worked in a very independent space and if you thought it was cool, [then you'd] try to make it work for the story. I wanted to do castles, dungeons and German villages, and got to do so."

The advantage of this approach shines through in *Nocturne*'s evident creativity. Each level feels distinct, and the game manages to balance itself just on the right side of subtle tongue-in-cheek humour without falling into campy self-parody. This is helped by *Nocturne*'s distinct cast list: as well as the deadpan Stranger, Spookhouse's agents include a jazz singer possessed by the Voodoo spirit Baron Samedi, a deadly ancient Tibetan monk and a seven-foot-tall horned demon named Moloch (the latter two of which can often be found sparring together). The enemies too are surprisingly dynamic; flying vampires will disappear and reappear behind the Stranger to flank him, ghouls may retreat after getting an arm shot off, and zombies can pick up severed limbs or rocks to use as missiles. Best of all is the game's surprisingly advanced dismemberment system. Instead of relying on abstract gibs, the game uses actual parts from a character model, using its physics system to send them bouncing off walls, floors and furniture with bloody abandon.

At the same time, it's hard to ignore the parts where *Nocturne*'s various features fail to mesh. In particular, the camera angles can be especially obnoxious, and often hinder *Nocturne*'s fast-paced action. This gets compounded when it comes to the


» [PC] Somebody call pest control! The Stranger comes face to face with the disgusting source of a zombie outbreak.





platforming sections, so that falling off of ledges will frequently cause more player deaths than many of the actual enemies.

"I'll go ahead and apologise on [Jeff Mills'] and my behalf," laughs Joe. "'We're sorry about the awful camera angles!' Man, fixed-camera angles in an action game is rough, but with much more experience under our belts, there are a lot of things we could have done much, much better. And jumping puzzles… in a fixed-camera 3D game… ouch, another apology for those. What were we thinking?"

N*octurne* received generally favourable reviews upon release, with special praise being heaped on its graphical capabilities. Yet the game never achieved anything like the success of the *Resident Evil* series or the first *Silent Hill*, the latter of which was released in the same year as *Nocturne*. This may have been down to the camera angles and jumping sequences, which received near-universal criticism, as well as some cutscene glitches and a perception in some quarters that the game tended to put style above substance. Yet it was also undoubtedly due in part to its limited target audience, as its beefy (for then) PC specs likely cut out a lot of potential users. Whatever the case, *Nocturne* never received a direct sequel (although indirect sequels were another matter) and the Stranger's adventures seemed set to remain a one-print run. Diehard fans briefly had their hopes raised in 2009, when the goggled anti-hero made an appearance in Terminal Reality's Infernal engine tech demo, but for now, they're still waiting for that time when a Stranger calls again. ★

Special thanks to Falconer02 for their help with images for this article.

> **"WE'RE SORRY ABOUT THE AWFUL CAMERA ANGLES… WHAT WERE WE THINKING?"**
> **JOE WAMPOLE**

SPOOKHOUSE VS THE BLAIR WITCH

THE MOVIE SPIN-OFF TURNED NOCTURNE SEQUEL

Every horror fan knows about *The Blair Witch Project*. What they may not know is that the film also got several videogame tie-ins shortly after its release. *Blair Witch Volume 1: Rustin Parr* was the first in a trilogy of *Blair Witch* games produced by publisher Gathering Of Developers, of which Terminal Reality was a founding member. What makes *Rustin Parr* unusual is that it's effectively a stealth sequel to *Nocturne*. It's 1941, and Spookhouse has received reports that a series of murders in Burkittsville, Maryland may be the work of malevolent spirits in the nearby woods. The case is assigned to Elspeth 'Doc' Holliday – Spookhouse's gadget-inventing answer to Q – with the Stranger demurring on the grounds that you can't shoot ghosts. Taking control of Holliday, players must explore the afflicted village to unravel the truth.

Another fixed-camera game, *Rustin Parr* uses the same engine and many of the gameplay mechanics of *Nocturne*. Yet it also leans far more into survival horror territory, dropping the unpopular jumping puzzles and paring back the gunplay in favour of a more investigative approach. Players will spend a lot of their time questioning the locals for clues, though like the film, they'll also often find themselves getting lost in the Blair Witch's haunted woods.

Wireless Controller

» **PLATFORM:** Xbox 360 » **YEAR:** 2005
» **COST:** £32.99 (launch), £25+ (today, boxed), £10+ (today, unboxed)

When Microsoft's second console launched, it ushered in a new era for standard game controllers – but you wouldn't know that to look at it. Visually, the pad looks like a fairly subtle evolution of the Xbox Controller S, retaining much of the basic layout but adding the LB and RB shoulder buttons (or Bumpers, in Microsoft parlance) in place of the Black and White buttons. The peripheral slots are gone from the top, and there's a new port for headsets at the bottom of the controller.

What made this controller so special, apart from the comfortable layout, was that it established wireless control pads as the default option for the console. Two AA batteries powered it as standard, but a rechargeable battery pack and proprietary charging cable were available as added extras. The new Xbox button in the centre of the controller gave you to access to the system menu during gameplay, and the green lights surrounding it indicated which player you were. The new button even allowed you to turn on the console from the comfort of your sofa. *

ESSENTIAL GAME

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 3

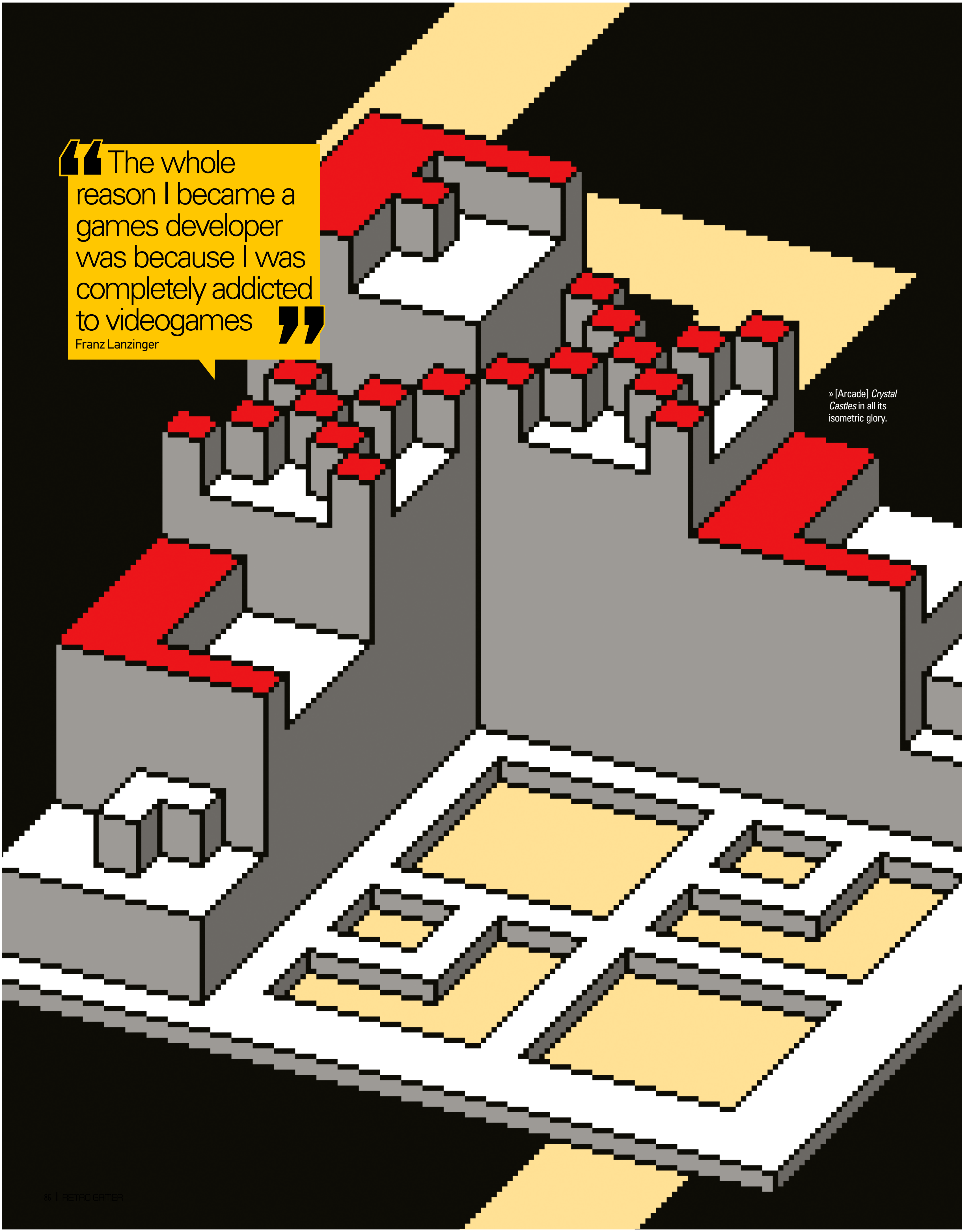
Racing games were something that the Xbox 360 controller handled very well, especially compared to contemporary rival systems – the DualShock 3's analogue triggers were awkward and Wii games often used an unconventional steering-wheel set up. *Project Gotham Racing 3* was a key showcase of the new console's capabilities at launch, with Bizarre Creations providing a graphically spectacular update to its street racing series. A sequel followed but this game is the one that gets us all nostalgic, since it's so closely tied to that initial jump into the high-definition era.

CK
1
2
3
4
START
Y
X
B
A

Wireless Controller fact

■ Xbox 360 wireless controllers can be used with PCs with an appropriate receiver, and they remain a popular controller option for the platform.

> “The whole reason I became a games developer was because I was completely addicted to videogames”
>
> Franz Lanzinger



» [Arcade] *Crystal Castles* in all its isometric glory.

In the chair with...

FRANZ LANZINGER

From creating arcade games for Atari in the Golden Age to converting the classics for home consoles, Franz Lanzinger is certainly the king of his castle

Words by Paul Drury

Who said hanging around in arcades playing silly videogames would never lead to anything? Franz Lanzinger did just that and it led to him joining Atari's coin-op division, producing the wonderfully imaginative *Crystal Castles*. It did help that he had a solid background in mathematics and programming and his technical nous saw him continue to make games for home consoles and computers for many decades. He now writes books about game design and any budding coders interested in creating games using Unity should check out his published work at franzlanzinger.com He also plays classical piano and laughs a lot. Not at the same time, though.

On the first level of *Crystal Castles*, the letters FXL are part of the structure. That's you, right?
[laughs] Yes, that's me. The X stands for Xaver, the German version of Xavier.

Was this you making a point about programmers deserving credit for their work?
Atari did let you include your initials by way of recognition but not your full name. They were afraid, and probably rightly so, that competitors would steal their employees so wanted to keep the names secret. By the time I left, Atari allowed each team to have a credits screen, which was the right thing to do… and I was partly responsible for that.

How?
I put an Easter Egg into *Crystal Castles* that said "Programmed by Franz Lanzinger" and management had a fit. They sent me a written letter saying if I didn't remove it, they'd reduce my bonus. I thought that was a bit bizarre but I took it out… which I really regret. I should never have told them I'd done it in the first place!

You joined Atari at the start of 1982. Were you a keen arcade gamer?
The whole reason I became a games developer was because I was completely addicted to videogames. There was a group of five of us who played a lot, like, three hours every single day between 1980 and 1984, in places like Central Park arcade, Galactican, Golfland… I still live right next to Golfland, here in Sunnyvale, California.

The original home of Atari!
My friend, Brian McGhie, one of our group of arcade gamers, got a job there. He told me Atari coin-op were hiring and so I applied. I had a degree in mathematics from the University Of Notre Dame and I went to graduate school in Berkeley, California. After that, I worked as a software engineer for three years, mainly scientific research programming, at several companies, working on government projects for people like DARPA, who invented the internet before it was even called that.

Would that be ARPANET?
That's right. I was using tools like Telnet and FTP, which are still part of the internet today and I was connecting to computers 400 miles away. That was a big deal back then [laughs].

What was it like meeting and working with the people who had made the games you had loved in the arcade?
I was heavily into *Asteroids* and *Missile Command* but I didn't know who had written those games. No one did! Of course, when I found out, that was just awesome. One of my favourite memories of Atari is sitting at this giant table in the cafeteria, which could seat about 30 people, eating lunch and talking about everything.

Did you learn a lot about game design from the more experienced coders?
Well, yes, though it's not like they came over and taught me stuff. Atari encouraged us to walk around the labs and play each other's games. That was really interesting for me. I saw Owen Rubin working on *Major Havoc*, Ed Logg working on *Millipede* and Dona Bailey, who gets credit for *Centipede*, but really it was Ed and her together who made that game. Dona was working on a game called *Weather Wars*, a fun trackball game, which never got released, though the prototype did make it out years later.

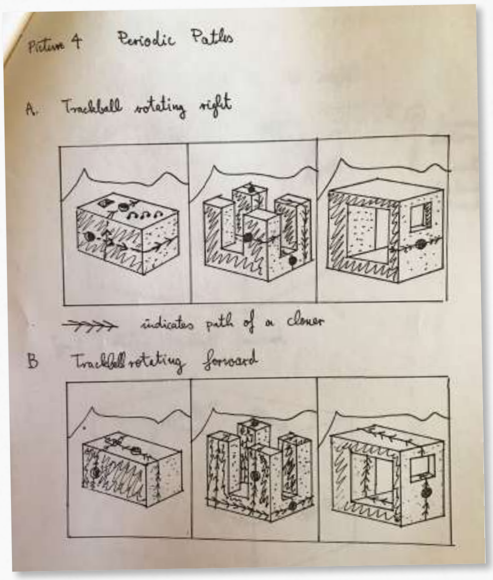
Was *Crystal Castles* your first project at Atari?
It's kind of a weird thing about my career that my best-known game is the first game I ever

> “Crystal Castles was the first game I ever wrote. I had been coding since 1973 but never any games”
> Franz Lanzinger

wrote. I had been coding since 1973 but never any games.

Did you come up with the idea yourself?
I was looking through Atari’s book of approved game ideas and saw one called *Toporoids*, which was similar to something I’d been thinking of, so I thought I’d do that. The title was a play on the word topology, meaning the study of three-dimensional shapes. Imagine a *Crystal Castles* level but done with vectors and with an *Asteroids* ship attached to the surface, which could fly up the walls and the view could spin in 3D.

That sounds interesting but is very different to how *Crystal Castles* turned out.
I was put into a group with a project leader, Scott Fuller for most of the project, Sam Lee as the hardware engineer, plus a technician. We decided we wanted it to be a raster game with a trackball and before I thought of the gameplay or the creatures in it I wanted to make the world. That’s how I approach games: make the world then populate it. I created a height map of columns, which drew from back to front, and got that working after a few months.


Picture 4 Periodic Paths
A. Trackball rotating right
→→→→ indicates path of a cloner
B Trackball rotating forward

» This is a sketch Franz made for a game called *Cloners*, done a month before starting on the *Toporoids* project which would evolve into *Crystal Castles*. You can clearly see the lineage.

GUBBLE
KEEP SCREWING FOR RIVETING ACTION

» [PC]: It might have been a family friendly game but that doesn’t mean you can’t slip an innuendo into the box.

Was Bentley Bear, the lead character, there from the start?
No. First I made an alien creature that in retrospect looked a lot like ET but before the film was released. He had a big head and a sharp ‘point’ instead of legs… he was oddly shaped. Let’s call it ‘programmer art’ [laughs].

When did the dots arrive?
We were trying different things and it seemed to work. *Crystal Castles* is really just 3D *Pac-Man* [laughs]. We agreed on a fairy-tale theme, with a bear as the main character collecting gems. The moving trees came from *The Wizard Of Oz*, where the trees throw apples.

But your game used a trackball, not a joystick like *Pac-Man*, which makes a big difference to the gameplay.
Trackballs were my favourite type of controller and they even designed a mid-sized one especially for *Crystal Castles*. I did not see joysticks taking over.

We suppose at that point, Atari made many different types of controllers for their arcade games, like a spinner for *Tempest* and the yoke for *Star Wars*.
I designed *Crystal Castles* specifically as a trackball game but at the end of development, management decided they wanted all their games to use a joystick. They forced me – well, ‘strongly encouraged’ me – to change *Crystal Castles* to use a joystick.

Was that joystick version any good?
It was terrible [laughs]. The game just did not work. It wasn’t designed that way.

FIVE TO PLAY

Franz’s fabulous five

CRYSTAL CASTLES

Year: 1983

■ As debuts go, this takes some beating. It was the first game Franz ever wrote and its distinctive look and imaginative gameplay mean it is rightly recognised as a standout title from the golden era of arcade gaming. Just play it with a trackball if at all possible.

TOOBIN’

Year: 1989

■ Franz began his console-coding career by converting this Atari coin-op title, which has you racing downstream in nothing more than an inflatable inner tube. A port which has to make compromises but retains the fun factor of the original.

MS PAC-MAN

Year: 1990

■ This was the most lucrative title Franz ever worked on, unsurprising when considering it was a version of the biggest-selling coin-op of all-time for the hugely popular NES console. We really like the simultaneous two-player modes he included.

KRAZY KREATURES

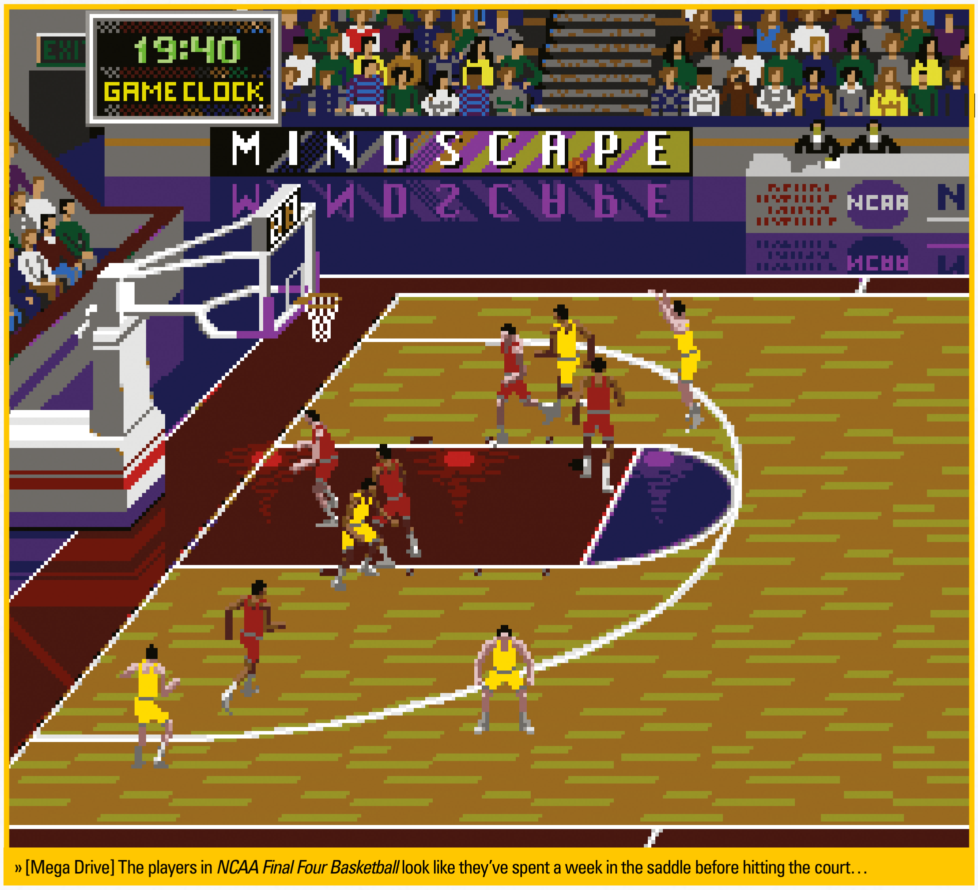
Year: 1990

■ *Candy Crush* has shown the incredible mileage of match three puzzlers and this original title from 1990 is definitely worth a play. We love the way the animals fly acrobatically onto the board and how the challenge ramps up to ridiculous proportions. Pretty good fun.

GUBBLE 2

Year: 1998

■ The original game built on the 3D puzzling aspect of *Crystal Castles*, but we recommend the sequel, which expands your toolkit, increases the number of carefully crafted stages on offer and even provides an editor for players to create their own levels.



» [Mega Drive] The players in *NCAA Final Four Basketball* look like they've spent a week in the saddle before hitting the court…

Thankfully, the trackball stayed for when the game went into the arcades…
One of my favourite memories is going to the first field test of *Crystal Castles* at the Galactican arcade. Every day after work I drove the six miles there and watched people play. It was awesome. I had arrived! This was my big break.

What a feeling!
Yeah, but then I was told the field test was not considered a success. All that matters to management is the money a game takes. *Crystal Castles* made a good amount of money but it wasn't number one in the arcade and that's what they wanted. We spent another three months making it better. They brought in Dave Ralston [co-creator of *Paperboy*] which was a really good move. He's a great designer and artist, and he helped me make more interesting levels, like some of the intricate ones with stairs at the back. On the next field test, it got to number one and it went into production.

Did it do well?
Atari had this thing called Theurer's Law [after Dave Theurer, the creator of *Missile Command*], which stated that your first game is never a success. I defied that law! I think they produced 5,000 cabinets and then another 2,000 conversion kits.

Those are decent numbers for 1983 so why was it your only coin-op title for Atari?
I was actually there for another year. Because *Crystal Castles* was a success, they asked me to work on an arcade game based on the movie *Gremlins*. They had a deal with Steven Spielberg, who I got to meet, which was very exciting. I was a fanboy so I just sat there, thinking, "Wow!" They flew me to LA to visit the movie set while they were filming as well. It was great!

What was the game like?
You played as Billy, the main character in the movie, and you went round with a flashlight, directing your light on gremlins to kill them. It used a joystick and a button and it scrolled in all directions. It used these new high-resolution monitors – double the usual 256 by 240 – and I was coding in a new, higher-level language, similar to C, but the game didn't get very far. That was my fault. I quit halfway through [the project].

Why did you leave Atari?
It's one of my big regrets in life, though taking a further step back, if I hadn't quit Atari, I wouldn't have met my wife, who I'm still with after all these years, so I'm glad about that [laughs]. I left because I didn't like how Atari handled the consumer versions of *Crystal Castles*. They didn't involve me and they didn't feel they needed to pay me anything because they owned it. In retrospect, having been in the industry for so long, I don't think that's unreasonable, but I was young and naïve and felt that I owned *Crystal Castles*. Without Atari and the other people who helped me, *Crystal Castles* wouldn't have existed but I couldn't see that back then.

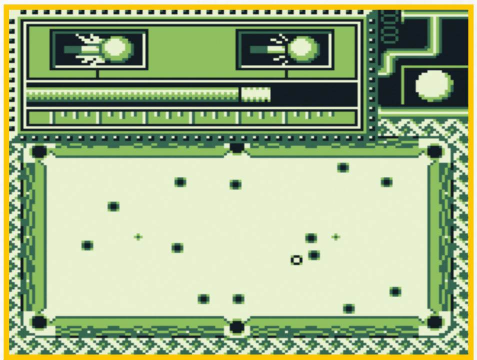
You returned to a previous employer and did business programming for many years until you got lured back into games development in 1989.
Tengen called me because they wanted to expand. They had already had some success making NES versions of *Pac-Man* and *Gauntlet* and wanted to do all the old Atari games through this agreement they had with Nintendo. They needed more people and offered me a salary of over $30,000. I was unemployed so I said, "OK!"

Was making console games very different to making arcade games?
It was actually very similar as I was still coding in 6502 Assembly language and I was even using the same special tools Atari had developed for doing coin-op games. Tengen was owned by Atari but was in a separate building about half a mile away. There was about 20 of us. They brought us a *Toobin'* arcade cabinet and it was immediately obvious we couldn't do it exactly the same. The NES was just not capable. We had all the graphics and sound and they gave me the source code but it was in C. We knew we would have to write it from scratch. By we, I mean me and Dave O'Riva, my good friend. It took us about nine months because we were learning how to develop on the NES.

Did you talk to Dennis Harper, the coder of the original?
[Laughs] That's a very good question because people doing the *Crystal Castles* conversions never spoke to me and I was really annoyed by that. Now, when the shoe was on the other foot, I never talked to him! ▶

SELECTED TIMELINE

- **CRYSTAL CASTLES** [1983] ARCADE
- **TOOBIN'** [1989] NES
- **MS PAC-MAN** [1990] NES/SNES/GENESIS
- **KRAZY KREATURES** [1990] NES
- **RAMPART** [1991] NES/SNES
- **CHAMPIONSHIP POOL** [1993] NES/SNES/GAME BOY
- **NCAA FINAL FOUR BASKETBALL** [1994] SNES/GENESIS
- **GUBBLE** [1996] PC/MAC
- **GUBBLE 2** [1998] PC
- **GUBBLE HD** [2007] PC
- **CLASSIC GAME DESIGN** [2014] BOOK
- **CLASSIC GAME DESIGN: SECOND EDITION** [2019] BOOK
- **2D GAME DEVELOPMENT WITH UNITY** [2021] BOOK
- **3D GAME DEVELOPMENT WITH UNITY** [2022] BOOK



» [Game Boy] *Championship Pool* works especially well as a handheld title.

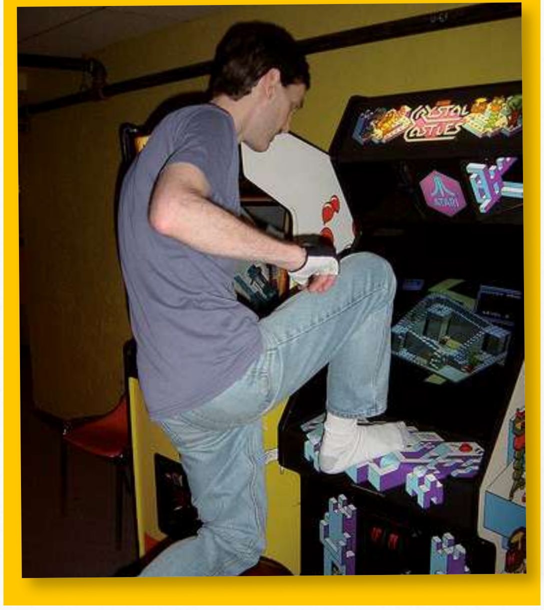
Did you ever go down a river in a tube to get you into the right mindset?
Another great question [laughs]. No, I never did. I should do it one day!

One for the bucket list, Franz. Next you handled *Ms Pac-Man*, which must have been more straightforward.
I had played it a lot, so yes, it was easier than *Toobin'* but it still couldn't be a straight conversion. The resolution is lower than on the arcade original so I couldn't do a pixel-for-pixel conversion. I decided to make the game scroll up and down so you can't see all the maze at once. People complained they couldn't see their score when they were at the bottom of the screen. I was like, "You'll find out pretty soon!" I also added a competitive and co-operative two-player mode.

AN END HAS A START

Franz on fighting for the finish

■ *Crystal Castles* is full of interesting ideas, from level warps to secret passages, and was one of the first arcade games to have a distinct ending, something Franz had to argue for. "Atari had had this great success with *Asteroids* because people played for hours, for days, and put up these humongous high scores," he explains. "They got a lot of free publicity and they didn't want to mess with that! All their games up to that point, apart from racing games, had no ending and they were pretty insistent on keeping that. I had to fight for it. I wrote a pretty long document giving all my reasons and finally they said, 'OK.'" If you want to see how the game concludes and haven't quite the skills to get there yourself, we recommend watching high scorer and well-known abbreviator Mark Alpiger, of *King Of Kong* fame. He can play *Crystal Castles* with his feet. You can't unsee some things.

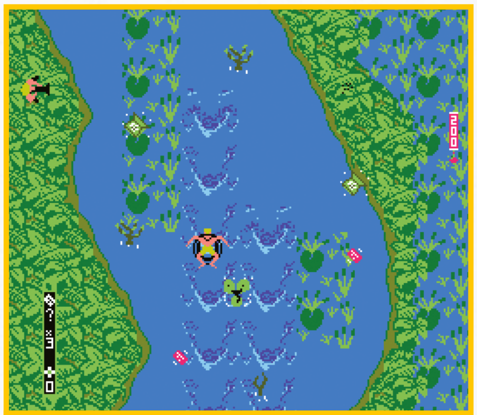


Namco had no problem with you messing about with the formula, then?
They said we could do what we wanted. They sent us no source code or any assets and told us to work it out for ourselves [laughs]. It was just me in my cubicle with a *Ms Pac-Man* arcade cabinet and the technicians had rigged up a pause button. I did everything just looking at paused screens.

You left Tengen after those two ports and set up your own company, Bitmasters, with Dave O'Riva. Tell us about your first game, *Krazy Kreatures*.
We wanted to try and make it on our own, be in control, do original games not conversions and have no more fighting with management. Also, Tengen wanted me to show up for work at 9am in the morning and I was not a morning person [laughs]. I liked match three games like *Columns* and we had great hopes *Krazy Kreatures* would be a big hit, but our publisher, American Videogame Entertainment, were an unlicensed developer. They had a hardware work-around so they could publish games on the NES without Nintendo's approval but Nintendo fought back and changed their hardware so unlicensed games didn't work anymore.

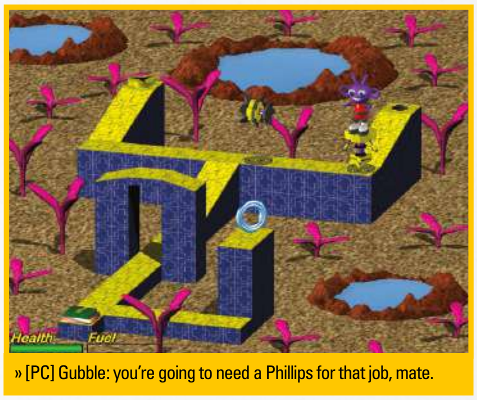
In the mid-Nineties, you produced a pair of sports games, *Championship Pool* and *NCAA Final Four Basketball*. Do you like trying new genres?
The reason those games happened was that was the work we could get [laughs]. As independent game developers, we relied on getting work from publishers. We tried to pitch original ideas but they would say, "No, do this!" We got a deal with Mindscape to do a pool game and that was great because it was at least an original game not a conversion. It was moderately successful so they asked us to do a basketball game. At great expense they got the NCAA licence so we had the rights to use real college names but we were not excited about making a basketball game… and I think it shows.

> "I began work on an arcade game based on the movie Gremlins and I met Steven Spielberg. I was a fanboy so I just sat there, thinking, 'Wow!'"
> Franz Lanzinger

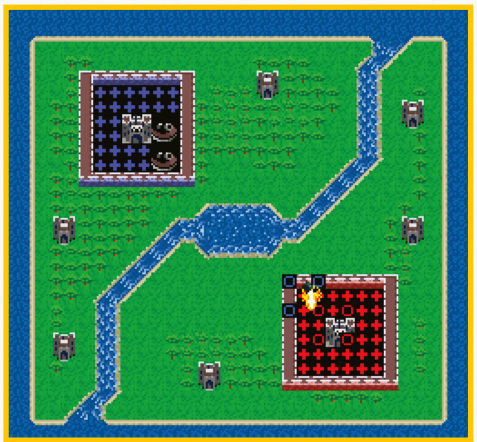

» [NES] Here's is a cool screenshot of Franz's conversion of *Toobin'* – ride the river, dude…

The players do look a bit bow-legged.
[Laughs] You're the first person to say that! Technically it was an interesting challenge. We used 3D Studio Max and we had a couple of very good artists who worked really hard for a year making these animations using a regular video camera to capture the moves and going through, frame by frame, to adjust the 3D models, then render them before they were turned into sprites for the Genesis and SNES. Looking back at videos of it on YouTube, though, and the comments… it was not well-received.

Let's move on to a game I think you are proud of: *Gubble*. Was this the spiritual successor to *Crystal Castles*?
In a word, yes! That was the exact idea. After *Final Four* was finished, Bitmasters was in trouble. We just couldn't get any work. The SNES and Genesis were coming to the end of their lives. The 3DO and PlayStation had arrived and we were not considered experienced enough for that technology. I left Bitmasters and started a new company, Actual Entertainment, with Mark Robichek at the beginning and later Eric Ginner joined. They were my gaming buddies from before I started at Atari! We'd stayed friends.



» [PC] Gubble: you're going to need a Phillips for that job, mate.

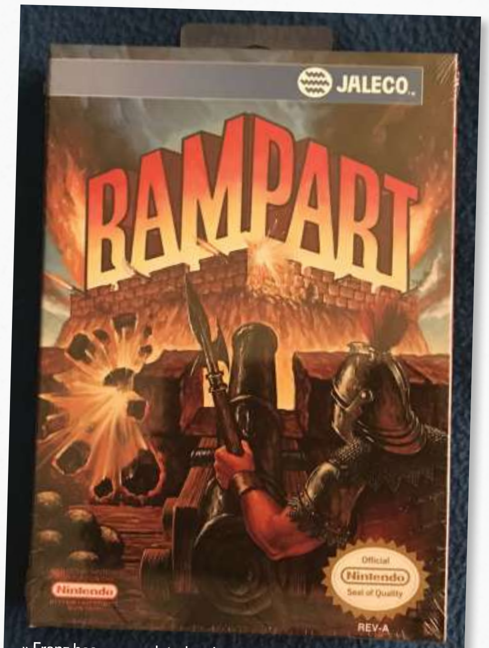


» [SNES] *Rampart* is a decent conversion seeing it lacks the original game's trackball controls.

Eric is a very good developer and had worked for the Jack Tramiel-run Atari, making games for the Jaguar and Lynx. I'd made a little prototype of a PC game and that grew into *Gubble*.

Gubble involves solving puzzles using tools like a screwdriver and hammer. Did you spend your childhood playing with Meccano?
That's an interesting connection. I think it probably is. I grew up in Austria and one of my favourite toys was the Maerklin Metallbaukasten [a metal construction set similar to Meccano] I made a lot of things with that and it developed my sense of building in 3D early on so maybe that was a subconscious influence.

You produced a sequel to *Gubble* in 1998 and a HD update in 2007 and also in 2020. The game must be close to your heart.
It's something I created, together with my good friends, and I own it. I'm pretty proud of the gameplay. I played the original game recently, on an old PC, and it does hold up after all these years.



» Franz has accumulated an impressive collection of his games – here is his sealed copy of *Rampart* for the NES.

You're still involved with game design but as an author, having written several books on game development. Do you think you have something to teach the new generation of game makers?
Yes, I think so. Kids don't know what the future holds so it's good to get the perspective of someone older, who's done it for many decades. I'd always wanted to write books about game design but I couldn't find a publisher. Then Unity came along and I thought I could combine talking about game design while creating small, prototype versions of well-known games in the books. That prompted *Classic Game Design* back in 2014 and it was a moderate success, still selling to this day.

Would you ever consider going back to making games yourself?
Yes, I'm considering it. I'm not making any promises, though! ✱

Thanks to Franz for sharing his original images and Martyn Carroll for additional help.

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

Post your questions at retrogamer.net/forum

NorthWay: Was a sequel to *Crystal Castles* ever considered?

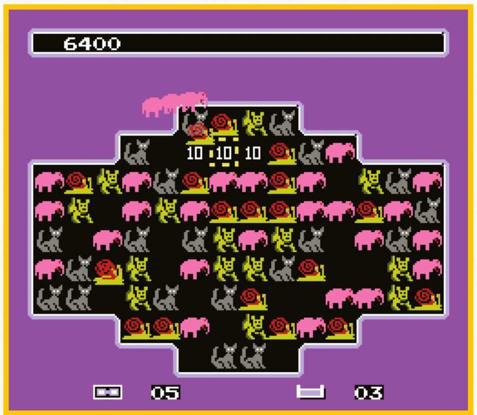
Back in the Eighties, when I was working on *Gremlins*, there was some movement towards doing a sequel. I made a couple of new levels and I changed the jump for Bentley so he'd jump a lot higher, twice as high, I think. I experimented a little but it never went anywhere. I've been thinking of a sequel ever since but the problem is I don't own the rights. I know that over the years, there were one or two attempts inside Atari to do a sequel but they never involved me.

Merman: Do you have any unfinished or unreleased games for the old hardware?

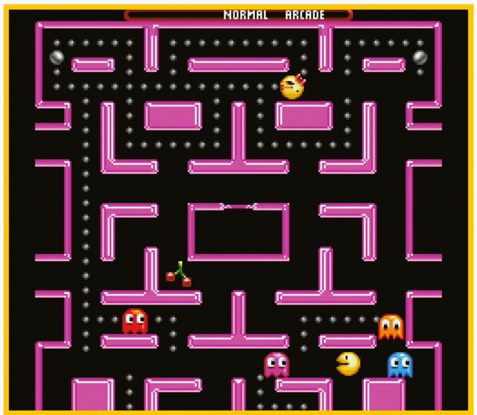
There was one called *Spuds*, for the SNES. It wasn't complete but it had three levels. At Bitmasters, after *Championship Pool*, we were trying to get an original game [concept] going. My artist, Greg Hancock, came up with the idea of having a potato as a main character and gave him little skinny arms and legs and had him running around, with an isometric view and an overhead view which you could switch between. I remember going to EA and trying to sell this idea to them and they just laughed, "A potato? Really?" When I left Bitmasters, I left everything behind and later, there was a break-in at Dave's house and everything was lost. Very sad.

Ely: Tell us about how Bentley Bear came about?

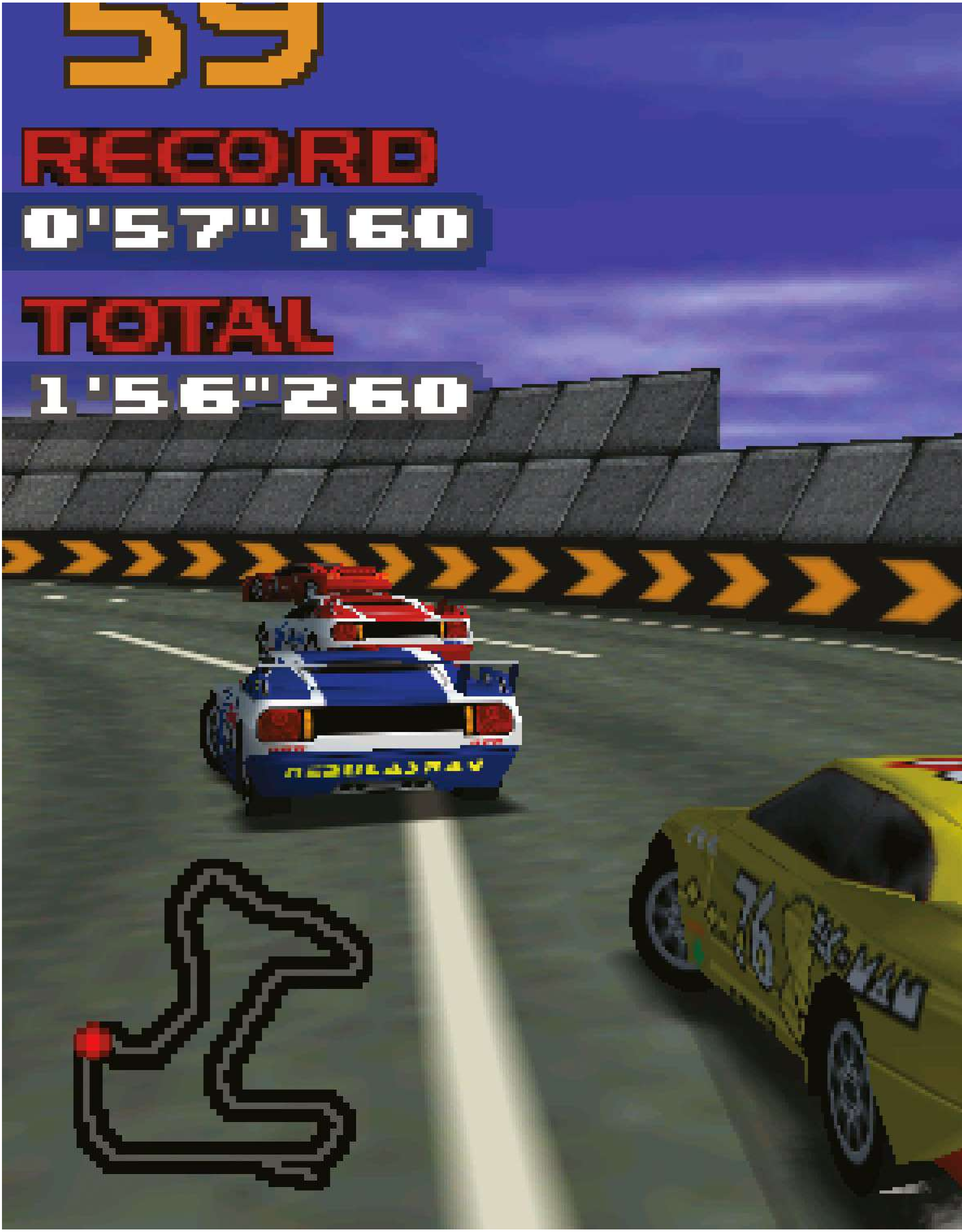
He came out of a brainstorming session. Our artist drew the bear and gave him a pouch and a hat and he was called Bear Braveheart. At that time, there was some controversy about the [baseball team] Atlanta Braves. People thought 'Brave' was offensive to native Americans. It's like what's been going on with the Washington Redskins [football team] recently. Management decided they didn't want to go there and rightfully so, so there was a contest inside Atari for a new name – and Bentley won!

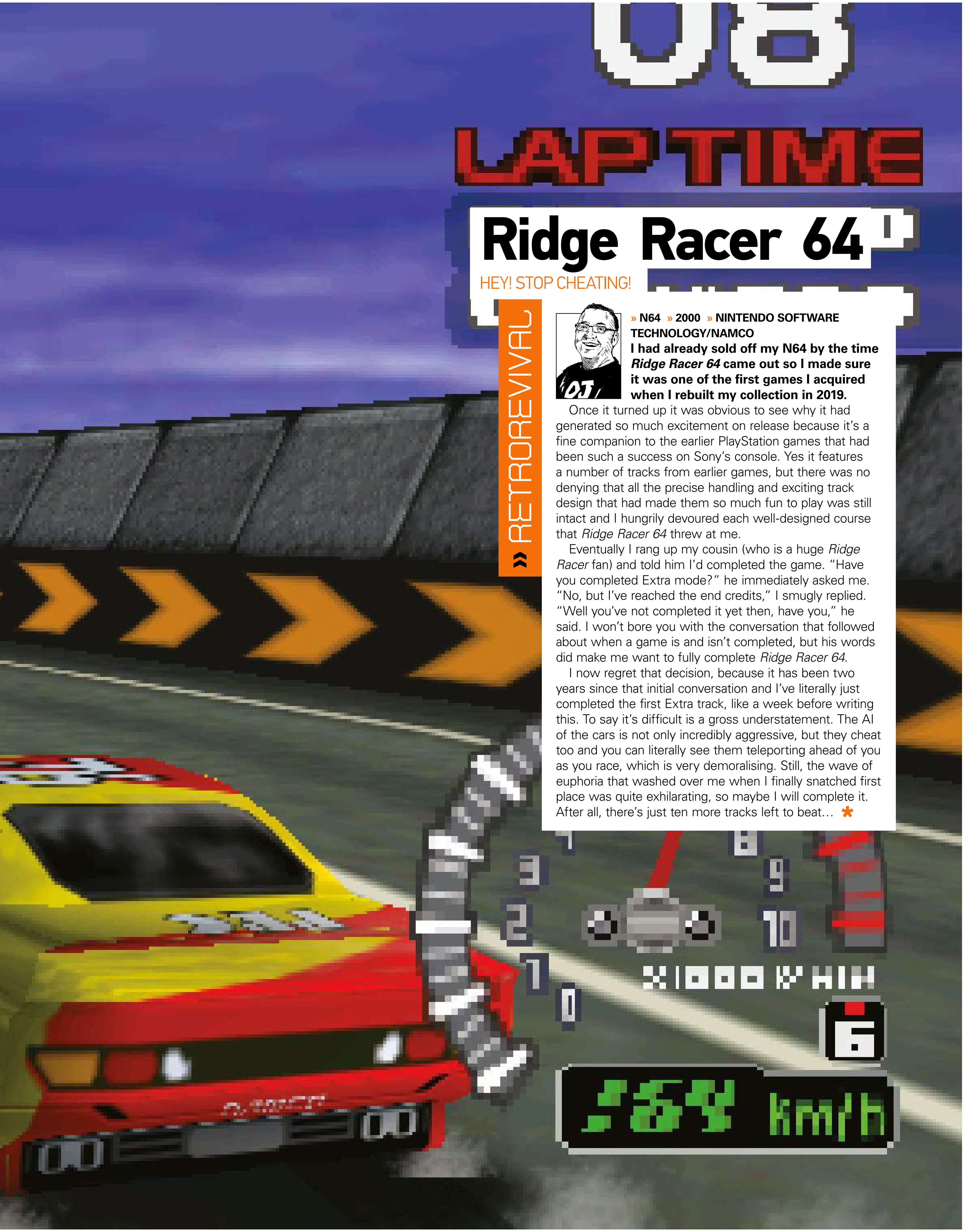


» [NES] *Krazy Kreatures* was Bitmasters first original title and is an early example of how compulsive match three titles can be.



» [SNES] Franz added some entertaining bows and whistles to his home versions of *Ms Pac-Man*.


59
RECORD
0'57"160
TOTAL
1'56"260
NEBULASRAY
76



Ridge Racer 64

HEY! STOP CHEATING!

» N64 » 2000 » NINTENDO SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY/NAMCO

I had already sold off my N64 by the time *Ridge Racer 64* came out so I made sure it was one of the first games I acquired when I rebuilt my collection in 2019.

Once it turned up it was obvious to see why it had generated so much excitement on release because it's a fine companion to the earlier PlayStation games that had been such a success on Sony's console. Yes it features a number of tracks from earlier games, but there was no denying that all the precise handling and exciting track design that had made them so much fun to play was still intact and I hungrily devoured each well-designed course that *Ridge Racer 64* threw at me.

Eventually I rang up my cousin (who is a huge *Ridge Racer* fan) and told him I'd completed the game. "Have you completed Extra mode?" he immediately asked me. "No, but I've reached the end credits," I smugly replied. "Well you've not completed it yet then, have you," he said. I won't bore you with the conversation that followed about when a game is and isn't completed, but his words did make me want to fully complete *Ridge Racer 64*.

I now regret that decision, because it has been two years since that initial conversation and I've literally just completed the first Extra track, like a week before writing this. To say it's difficult is a gross understatement. The AI of the cars is not only incredibly aggressive, but they cheat too and you can literally see them teleporting ahead of you as you race, which is very demoralising. Still, the wave of euphoria that washed over me when I finally snatched first place was quite exhilarating, so maybe I will complete it. After all, there's just ten more tracks left to beat… *

>> Lots of variety this issue as we play the latest Pocky & Rocky game, check out a brand-new GoldenEye documentary, play the latest Evercade cart and see how the high-definition remake of Klonoa fares

✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH

DARRAN

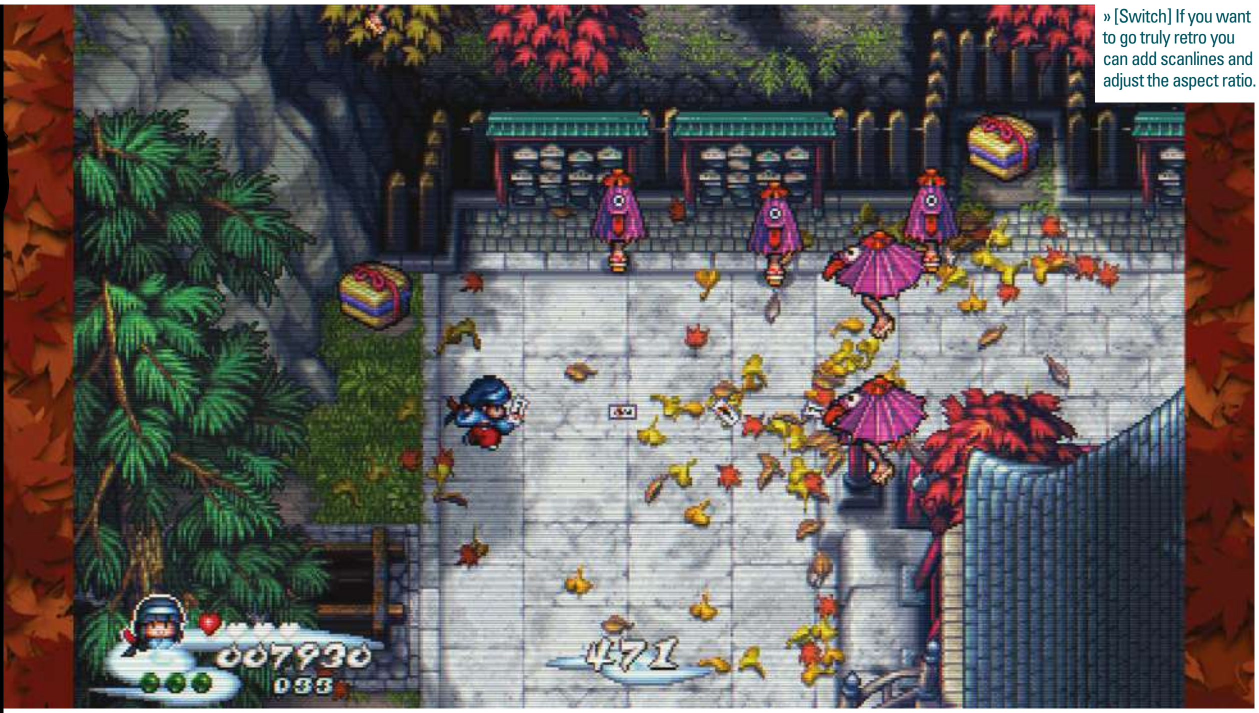
Evercade: Intellivision Collection 2

The virtual keypad is a pain to use, but I've still discovered some interesting games, particularly *Hover Force*, *Sharp Shot* and *Cloudy Mountain*.

NICK

Capcom Fighting Collection

This could have been a simple *Darkstalkers* package, so I've appreciated the effort to bring in extra games like *Cyberbots*.



» [Switch] If you want to go truly retro you can add scanlines and adjust the aspect ratio.

Pocky & Rocky Reshrined

A REMAKE FOR THE AGES

INFORMATION

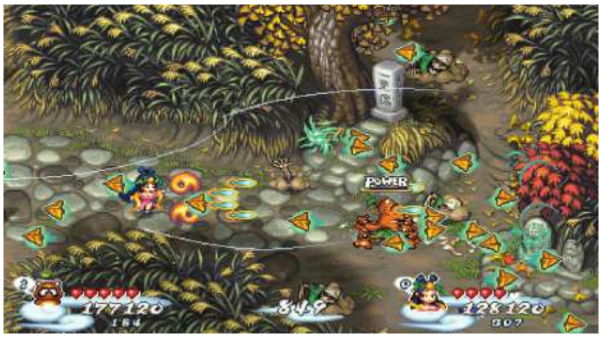
- » **FORMAT REVIEWED:** SWITCH
- » **ALSO ON:** PS4
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £24.99, £26.99 (DIGITAL)
- » **PUBLISHER:** ININ GAMES, NATSUME (DIGITAL)
- » **DEVELOPER:** TENGO PROJECT
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

We're not sure why the original team behind *Wild Guns, The Ninja Warriors* and *Pocky & Rocky* decided to revisit its SNES games for contemporary consoles, but we're bloody glad it did. Complete copies of all three SNES games will cost you around £2,000 so the fact that *Pocky & Rocky Reshrined* is currently available from most retailers for under £25 is shockingly good value for money.

While *Wild Guns Reloaded* and *The Ninja Saviours: Return Of The Warriors* stuck very closely to the structure of the original SNES games (albeit with greatly enhanced visuals and extras like new characters) *Reshrined* is more a remake than a straight remaster. Yes it starts off in familiar territory with an opening stage which is almost identical structurally to its SNES sibling, but it soon transforms into its very own game.

Mechanically, *Pocky & Rocky Reshrined* is virtually identical to the SNES original, meaning you can either take out enemies with Pocky's ofudas or use her gohei to tackle nearby enemies and repel incoming projectiles. Pocky also has a handy slide, which is great for getting her out of tight spots and she can also use smart bombs, although they're rather limited in their reach and won't destroy everything on-screen.

As Story mode continues other characters are introduced, typically



» [Switch] The Switch version aims for 60fps but occasionally dips lower when a lot is happening on-screen.

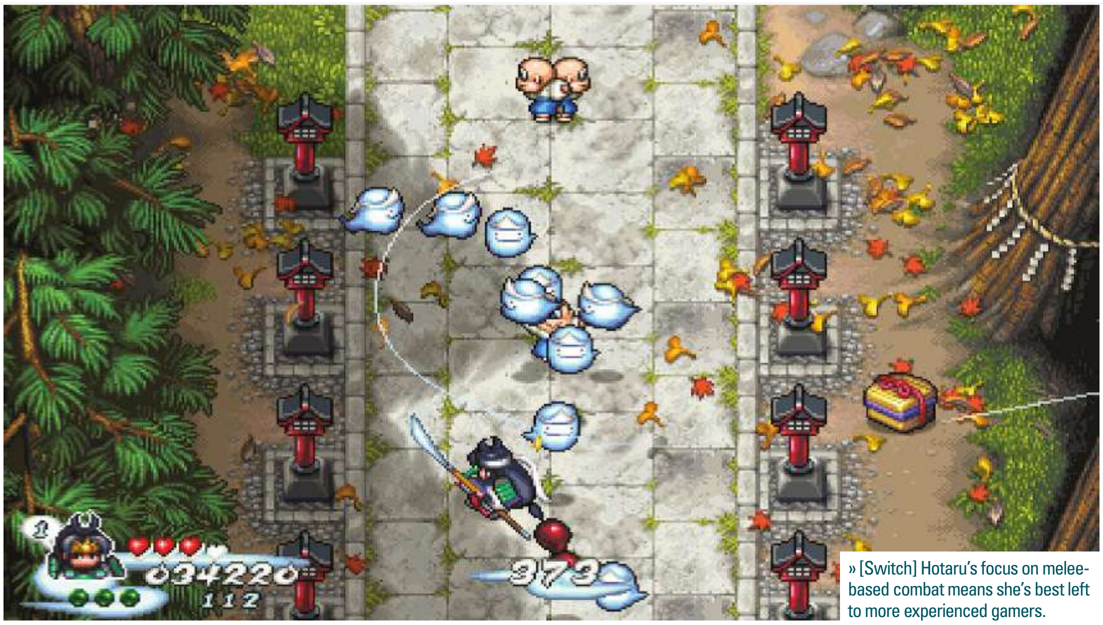
BRIEF HISTORY

» *Reshrined* traces its origins back to Taito's *Kiki Kaikai* which appeared in arcades in 1986. Natsume acquired the licence to create a sequel on SNES called *Pocky & Rocky*, which arrived in 1992. A follow-up, *Pocky & Rocky 2*, appeared in 1994 with the GBA adventure *Pocky & Rocky With Becky* debuting in 2001.

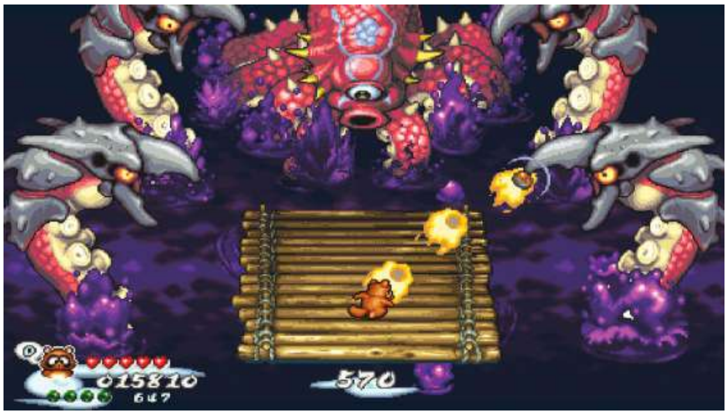
» [Switch] The cutscenes are great and nicely expand on *Pocky & Rocky's* story.

Manual
Display
Items

» [Switch] *Reshrined's* presentation is sumptuous, from its gorgeous aesthetics to its slick digital manual.



» [Switch] Hotaru's focus on melee-based combat means she's best left to more experienced gamers.



» [Switch] Bosses are either brand-new or riffs on those seen in *Pocky & Rocky*.

for just a stage (although they'll be unlocked to use in Free mode once you've completed the game). Rocky returns from the earlier games and plays similarly to Pocky, although the smart bomb he uses explodes in a circle, while Pocky's takes the form of a cross. Brand-new characters include Hotaru, a samurai warrior that specialises in melee and charge attacks, Ame-no-Uzume who has incredible projectile power and the ability to fly and Ikazuchi who employs devastating elemental attacks.

In addition to new characters, *Reshrined* also introduces new special moves which are activated by either rapidly pressing or holding down the attack or deflect buttons. The Attack Augmentation intensifies the power of attacks, while the Purification Charge is a defensive move. Each character typically has their own styles, which further diversifies them. For example, Pocky's Purification Charge is Rope Barrier which protects her from incoming attacks for a limited time, while Rocky's Statue Transformation makes him equally impervious but limits his movement.

These new abilities kick in from *Reshrined*'s third stage and are extremely handy because it's one tough game, even with infinite continues. Enemies come at you thick and fast and their attack patterns are varied enough to keep you on your toes. Fortunately, while *Reshrined* is tough it never feels completely unfair.

Infinite continues and some well-considered checkpoints do ease the pain, but it's a pity that Story mode doesn't give you the option to earn continues. An Extra Easy mode option is included, but bafflingly it's only unlocked once you've amassed 3,000 coins during play. Coins are awarded by defeating enemies and can also be used to buy numerous power-ups from merchants, so unlocking this mode is easier said than done. It's quite the oversight on Tengo Project's part and feels further redundant with infinite continues, but it's at least there if you want to try a single-credit run.

Even though *Reshrined* is quite short (just eight stages) and offers very little beyond its new characters and co-operative Free mode, we've still had tremendous fun with it. The (largely unique) playing styles of each character mean new runs feel significantly different and Tengo Project has crammed plenty of detail and humour into the gorgeous-looking levels. You can see from the surrounding screenshots just how pretty *Reshrined* is, but they don't convey the excellent animation and abundant humour that runs through the game like a name in a stick of rock. Leaves rustle in the breeze, clouds drift lazily overhead and enemies stumble and get upset. The pixel work throughout is exceptional and highlights just how good modern 2D games can look.

✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

KIKI KAIKAI

1UP
82200
HIGH SCORE
49000
SCENE 3

▼ SOMETHING NEW

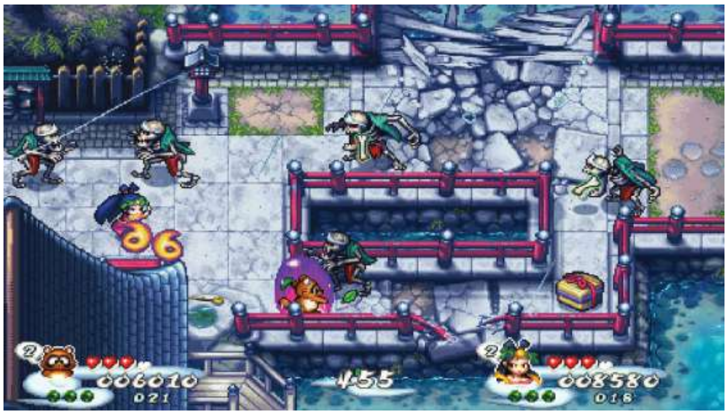
TANUKI JUSTICE

Add in terrific presentation and *Reshrined* becomes something truly special. Its difficulty may be too much of a barrier for some, but anyone else will discover a tremendously engaging action game that becomes very hard to put down. It's a sensational update and Tengo Project's best game yet.

In A Nutshell

Yes it's hard, but it's also a monumental upgrade over a SNES gem which is now prohibitively expensive to buy. An exceptional action game from an exceptional developer.

>> Score **90%**



» [Switch] There are numerous power-ups in *Reshrined* and all will aid you. Pocky is currently using a handy shield.

✱ PICK OF THE MONTH

Capcom Fighting Collection

» System: Switch (Tested), PS4, Xbox One, PC **» Buy it from:** Online **» Buy it for:** £32.99

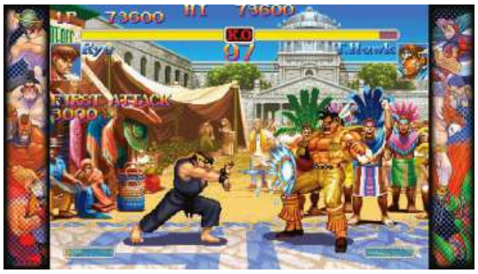
This compilation's name isn't quite a misnomer, but with *Darkstalkers, Night Warriors, Vampire Savior, Vampire Hunter 2* and *Vampire Savior 2* all included, this feels very much like a *Darkstalkers* package with some bonus games. That's not a bad thing as Morrigan, Donovan and company can still offer as much fun as any other cast of fighters, to the point that we wonder why Capcom doesn't bring these spooky scrappers back.

The other games in the package are an eclectic bunch. *Red Earth* is on consoles for the first time ever, and it's a nice twist on the genre in which you fight against gigantic monsters rather than regular enemies. It looks great but isn't one of Capcom's more celebrated games. *Pocket Fighter* is goofy fun, *Cyberbots* is an excellent mech brawler and *Hyper Street Fighter II* needs no real introduction. Finally, *Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo* is also included and adds a nice bit of variety.

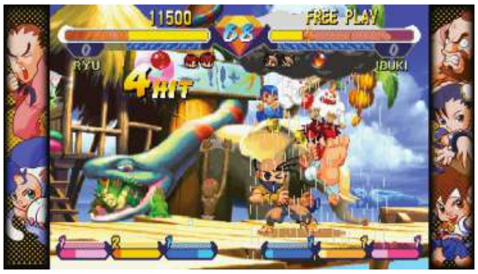
This is no bare-bones collection. Full options are available for each game, and regional variations are easily accessible. You can pop into Training mode for a bit of quick practice, and Museum mode presents original art, design documents and music for you to enjoy, though some games have more material available than others. Online play with rollback netcode is available for every game.

Though it's very good, It's not a perfect collection. *Vampire Savior, Vampire Savior 2* and *Vampire Hunter 2* are all similar, and while some past console versions rolled their features up together, this compilation doesn't. The quick save option is appreciated, but for some reason you only get one save slot for the whole compilation, rather than one for each game. Additionally, if you're planning to buy *Capcom Arcade 2nd Stadium*, many of the games here are also available as part of that collection.

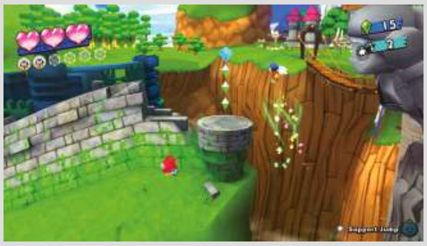
>> Score **86%**



» [Switch] If you just want the biggest name in fighting games, Capcom has you covered.



» [Switch] *Pocket Fighter* is often overlooked, but it's a great addition to this compilation.



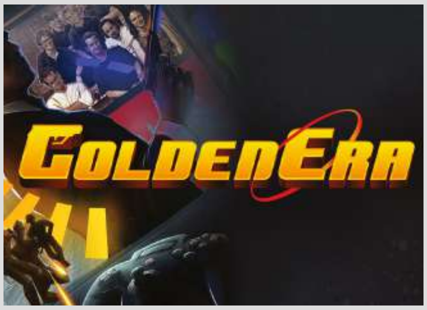
Klonoa Phantasy Reverie Series

» System: PS4 (tested), PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series S/X, Switch, PC
» Buy it for: £44.99 **» Buy it from:** Retail, online

This collection bundles *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile* and *Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil*, with the former based on the Wii remake rather than the PlayStation original. Both games are solid platformers with some clever level designs that take advantage of 3D space, and while you won't find many additions here, there are difficulty modes for those who want them. The bright colours and simple textures translate well to modern displays, though some of the original graphical effects have been lost and the voice work in the first game sounds rough. The package feels a tad expensive, but the high prices of the original games make this the most affordable option to own them today.

NICK THORPE

>> Score **80%**

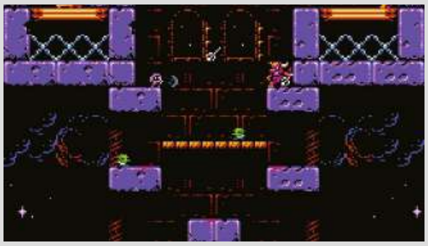


GoldenEra

» Studio: Altitude Films
» Director: Drew Roller

***GoldenEye 007* is one of the most celebrated first-person shooters of all time, and this film explores Rare's N64 classic in great detail.** The documentary does a great job of setting the scene for anybody unfamiliar with the company or the game, and offers plenty of insight from key staff and other expert commentators. However, what really makes the film special is that it goes very deep. You'll learn about the culture surrounding the game, from remake efforts and fan films to speedrunning and modding, as well as related subjects such as *Perfect Dark*, the *Timesplitters* series and the ultimate fate of Free Radical. With high production values and an interesting story to tell, this is an easy watch.

NICK THORPE



Evercade: Morphcat Games Collection 1

» System: Evercade, Evercade VS
» Buy it for: £17.99 **» Buy it from:** Retail

Fans of platforming and problem-solving will certainly enjoy Morphcat's first Evercade cartridge. *Micro Mages* is an excellent multiplayer-based platformer with strong *Super Meat Boy* vibes, while *Böbl* is a clever puzzler where you control a bubble and must navigate increasingly complex stages. The final main game is *Spacegulls*, an engaging effort with *Joust*-style mechanics. All three games are genuinely great fun, but additional value comes in the form of *Micro Mages Second: Quest* and *Super Bat Puncher Demo*, the game that led to Morphcat being formed. Morphcat's first cartridge may be low on games, but it's high on quality and another Evercade release you won't want to miss.

DARRAN JONES

>> Score **85%**

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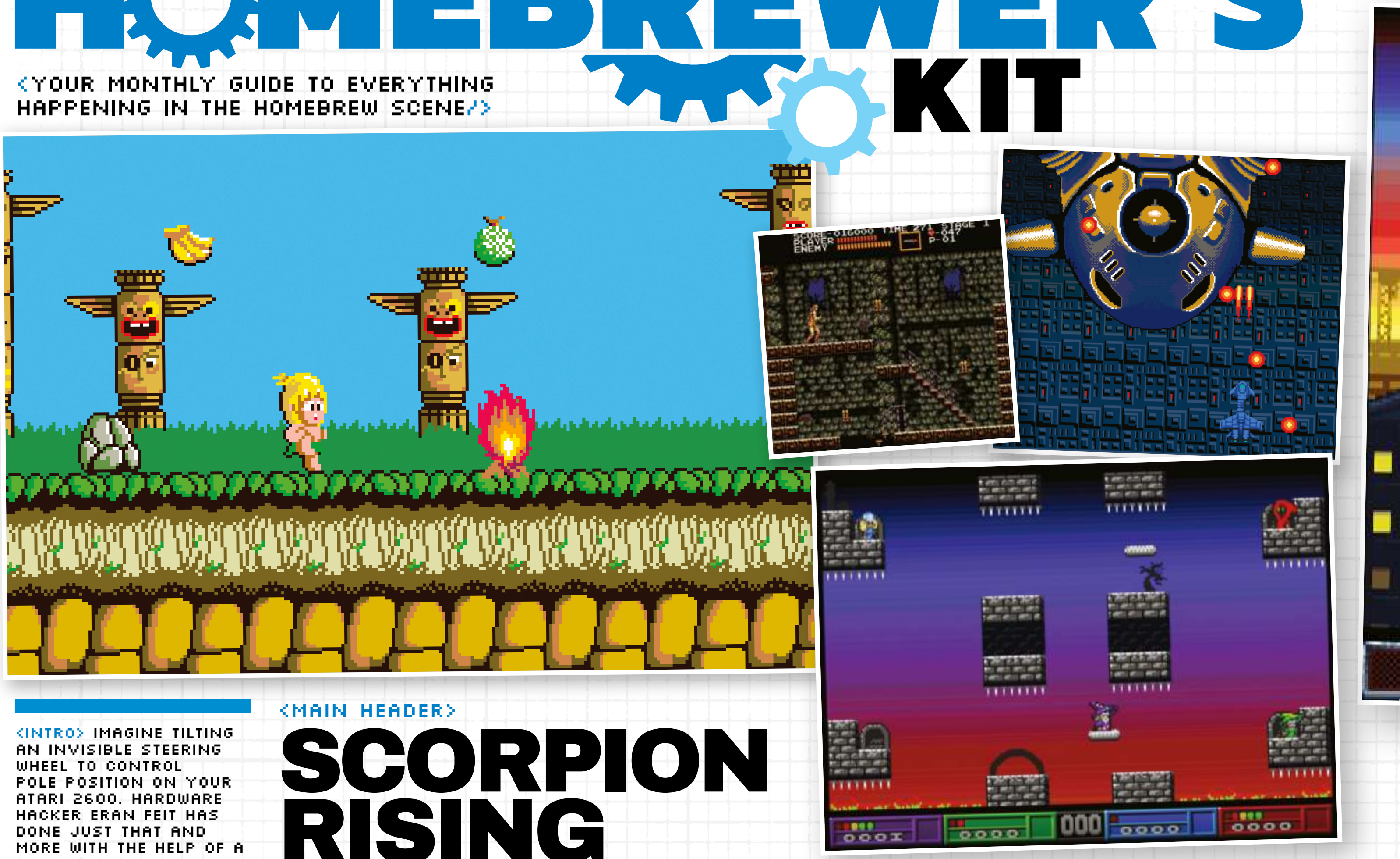
THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

<YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE HOMEBREW SCENE/>



<!--- [AMIGA] MIXEL'S WIZONK IS INSPIRED BY SUPER SMASH BROS AND WILL SUPPORT UP TO FOUR PLAYERS. --->

<INTRO> IMAGINE TILTING AN INVISIBLE STEERING WHEEL TO CONTROL POLE POSITION ON YOUR ATARI 2600. HARDWARE HACKER ERAN FEIT HAS DONE JUST THAT AND MORE WITH THE HELP OF A RASPBERRY PI, SENDING US A YOUTUBE PLAYLIST OF SEVERAL GAMES WITH MOTION CONTROLS; VISIT BIT.LY/ATARI-HANDS TO SEE HOW IT WAS DONE. WE MAY NOT HAVE PLAYED THE OTHER GAMES MENTIONED THIS MONTH LIKE THAT, BUT IT'S A GREAT EXAMPLE OF DOING SOMETHING NEW WITH OLD MACHINES. </INTRO>

<!--- THE SCORPION ENGINE'S CREATOR ERIK HOGAN, AND HIS FRIEND'S DOG HANZO. --->

<MAIN HEADER>

SCORPION RISING

<INTRO> ERIK HOGAN'S SCORPION ENGINE IS CREATING AMAZING NEW AMIGA GAMES WITHOUT THE NEED FOR CODING KNOWLEDGE </INTRO>

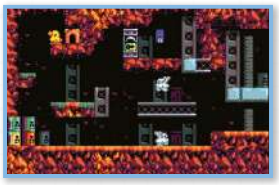
<BODY> **Erik's new engine emerged from his work with John Tsakiris converting Patrick Nevian's action RPG series *Tales Of Gorluth*, and their own long-term RPG shooter project AlarCity.** "We had developed a couple of prototypes of that game that I was fairly pleased with," says Erik, "but development was extremely difficult because every part was hard coded and didn't allow us to rapidly test ideas."

Erik was inspired by using Unity in his day job, and the older Klik 'N Play programming utility. He was keen to share the engine's key principles with us. "Performance – optimisation is important and an ongoing process; flexibility – the scripting language is powerful enough to add almost any required gameplay feature; ease of development – it runs on modern Windows computers and can use PNG files for art, as well as levels using the popular Tiled map editor tool. The editor is designed so that it can be used proficiently by both technical and non-technical users."

Games created with the engine will run on any Amiga with 1MB of RAM, making extra features and

PROMISING PREVIEWS

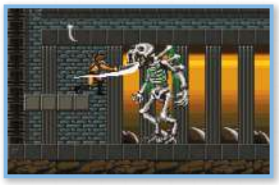
<INTRO> VISIT BIT.LY/HB-236 FOR LINKS & MORE INTERVIEWS </INTRO>



DUCKSTROMA

ABNarwhal

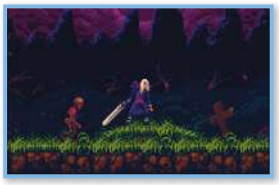
< Almost finished as we go to print, this cute platformer originally appeared on Spectrum and MSX and reaches Amiga thanks to the Scorpion Engine.



PRIMAL BLADE

Dante

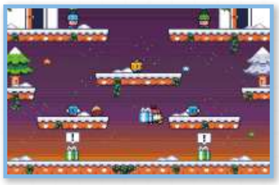
< This hack-and-slash platformer was built in an earlier version of the engine, and Dante hopes to return and update it.



GOTHICVANIA

Erik Hogan

< One of Erik's own projects, drawing on *Castlevania*; other examples included with the engine are shoot-'em-ups and *Amigo The Fox*.



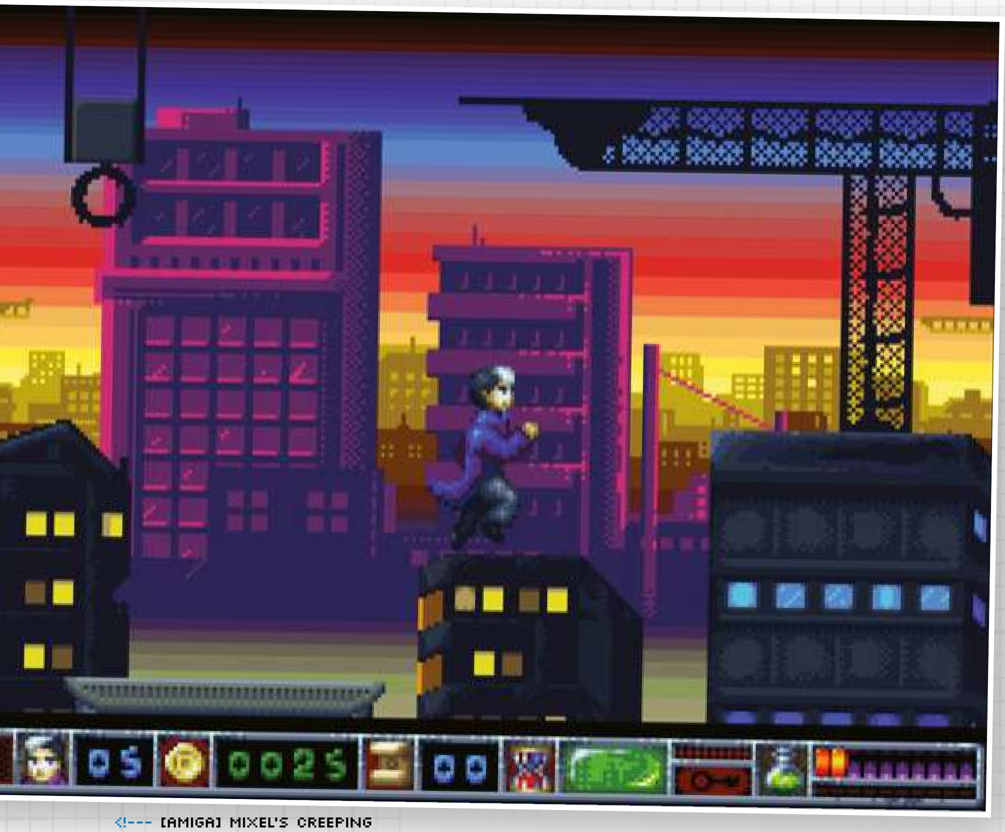
SUPER DELIVERY BOY

Neeso Games

< After releasing the *Holiday Shift* spin-off, work will resume on this mixture of cute Japanese platform games and modern indies (*Dead Cells*, *Katana Zero*).

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**



<!--- [AMIGA] MIXEL'S CREEPING ME OUT: HEX NIGHT IS LOOKING VERY PROMISING. LOOK OUT FOR A REVIEW WHEN THE GAME IS FINALLY COMPLETED. --->

<!--- MIXEL (MICHAEL DAWES) SAYS, "I'M JUST LUCKY SCORPION STARTED EVOLVING WHEN IT DID." --->

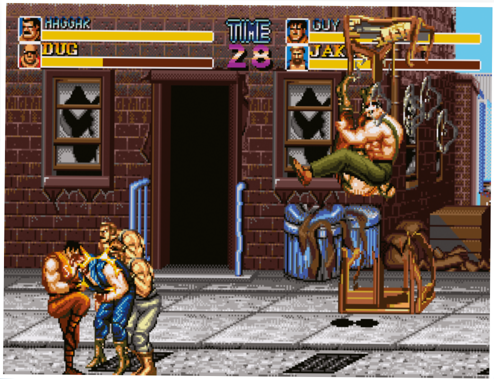
graphic modes available to AGA users. The recent AmiGameJam (see issue 234) featured great games created with Erik's engine, including Dante's *Green Beret* and some early work on *Wonder Boy AGA*.

Among the promising projects (see boxout) is *Creeping Me Out: Hex Night* by Mixel (Michael Dawes). "It's a single-player plot-driven action platformer with big exploration-heavy levels," says Michael. "You control a pair of friends trying to save their town from an ancient curse. It handles somewhere between *Turrican* and *Castlevania 3*, with lots of secrets, alternate paths, etc. I'm over half done in terms of content. I still have a lot of levels, boss fights and weapon upgrades to make!" Feedback from users like Mixel has helped to add new features and fix bugs, "Mouse support is what I'm looking forward to most!" His reasons for using the engine, "Ease, power, and how helpful Erik has been!" For those needing help, Erik says, "The English Amiga Board thread bit.ly/eab-scorpion has always been the best place, with an increasing number of Scorpion Engine veterans willing to help newcomers. There is also a Discord server, the link to join that is available on request." The engine and example games can be downloaded from bit.ly/scorpion-github. It is free to use, as Erik explains. "My preference would be that if you make money from Scorpion, that you help us by backing the Patreon. Supporter, Gold and Ultimate editions are available through the Patreon with different splash screens, the Ultimate Edition features the ability to use your own splash screen. Publishers intending to do a boxed game should get in touch to discuss a special arrangement." We look forward to more new games being made with the Scorpion Engine. </BODY>

MARIA RENARD'S REVENGE

DomKid

<With a large boss in place already, this *Castlevania* tribute has a female main character armed with a magic dove.



<!--- [MEGA DRIVE] HAGGAR AND GUY GET STUCK INTO LEVEL 1 OF FINAL FIGHT ULTIMATE. --->

NEWS BYTES

<INTRO> ALL THE LATEST NEWS, HANDILY ARRANGED BY FORMAT </INTRO>

<**Mega Drive:** Capcom fans will be drooling at this glimpse of *Final Fight Ultimate*, with programmer Mauro Xavier promising simultaneous two-player action. Watch the trailer at bit.ly/md-ffultimate </>

<**Amstrad GX4000:** Spooky goings-on as *Blinky's Scary School* is being converted from the C64. More at bit.ly/blinky-gx4000 </>

<**Atari XL:** A brilliant new conversion of *Moon Cresta* by Gary Ryan, requiring the VXBE add-on. Find it at bit.ly/mooncresta-vbxe </>

<**PICO-8:** Ridgek released *Downstream Dream*, a *Toobin'*-inspired game of whitewater rafting. See it at lexaloffle.com/bbs/?tid=48081 And with Paul Hammond's *Zoo Keeper* finished – pahammond.itch.io/zoo-keeper – he is now converting *Tutankham.* </>

<**VIC-20:** *Get More Diamonds* is the great new platform game from Derek and RESET, requiring a 35K expansion. More at reset64-magazine.itch.io/get-more-diamonds </>

<**ZX Spectrum:** Jonathan Cauldwell released a preview video of Arcade Game Designer 5, the game creation utility for 128K Spectrums. It's at bit.ly/agd5-preview </>

<**Mazania:** *Mage Rage Part II* from John Davies celebrates 40 years of the Spectrum with its levels inspired by classic games. Try it at snagultoof.itch.io/mazania Mananuk launched sequel *Paleto Jones 2* – bit.ly/paletojones2 </>

<**Amiga:** REDPILL Game Creator was updated to v0.910, with new features including network gaming. Try it at bit.ly/redpill0910 </>

<**Various:** *Hyperblast*, the sequel to horizontally scrolling Amiga shmup *Inviyya* from Tigerskunk, is planned to release on Amiga and Neo Geo. More at tigerskunk.itch.io/hyperblaster
Silly Venture 2022 Summer Edition begins in Gdansk, Poland from 12-14 August, with game coding competitions across multiple formats. More info at sillyventure.eu/en </>

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CHAMPION CODER

JON CORTAZAR

<INTRO> JON CORTAZAR OF RELEVO IS AN ENTHUSIASTIC MSX FAN </INTRO>

<INFO FROM: SPAIN WEBSITE: RELEVOVIDEOGAMES.COM/, RELEVO.ITCH.IO/ FORMAT: MSX RECENTLY CODED: RELEVO'S SNOWBOARDING, NINJA SAVIOR, INVASION OF THE ZOMBIE MONSTERS DEVELOPING: LOS TEMPOS DEL FUEGO, BRITISH BOB VS MR CRACKSMAN/>

<!--- JON'S FATHER BOUGHT HOME AN MSX WHEN HE WAS EIGHT, AND IN 2003 HE STARTED DRAWING PIXELS AND PROGRAMMING HOMEBREW. --->

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE TO START RELEVO?

<I joined the MSX homebrew team Karoshi Corp led by Eduardo Robsy in 2003. I formed Relevo in 2009, with La Corona Encantada for MSX and ZX Spectrum, exploring different platforms. A couple of years later Relevo was founded as a limited company that focuses on modern platforms, although we keep our retro productions alive. />

WHAT IS YOUR DEVELOPMENT SETUP FOR RETRO GAMES?

<I cross-develop on a PC running Windows. For the coding part, I use Notepad++ and asMSX assembler and on the graphics side, I use Adobe Photoshop with PCX2MSXi and lots of custom tools for bitmap conversion. Music and SFX are handled by the excellent tools WYZtracker and WYZPlayer. />

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT ANY OF THE GAMES THAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

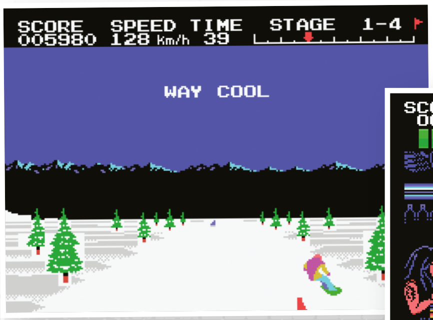
<*British Bob Vs Mr Cracksman* is a fun action platformer that will be released in 2023 for MSX. Our second project is the sequel to our first title, *La Corona Encantada*, announced years ago and delayed for several reasons. Right after the new *British Bob*, we will focus on finishing this one, as fans [have been] asking for it for ages. />

WHY DO YOU SUPPORT THE MSX?

<I love it because it is the one with which I drew my first pixel and wrote my first line of code. But it is not just about nostalgia, I also love how the system manages graphics the console way, with tile-based graphic modes and hardware sprites and the general look and feel of the Japanese MSX games. />

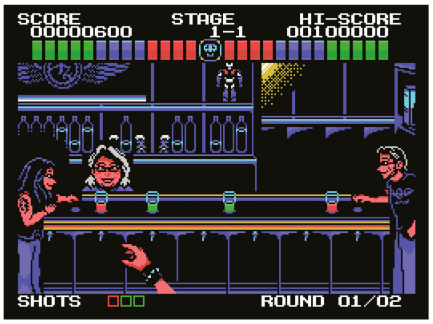
WILL YOU TRY TO EXPAND TO OTHER RETRO FORMATS?

<I have a working version of the MSX game *Ninja Savior* ported to the classic Game Boy, but it lacks music. I'd also love to explore other Z80-based machines such as the Master System, and more complex machines such as the Sega CD or Neo Geo. (Our latest modern project, *Bullfighter NEON*, is a love letter to early Neo Geo future-sports games.) />



<!--- [MSX] – PHYSICAL CARTRIDGES OF THE KONAMI TRIBUTE RELEVO'S SNOWBOARDING ARE CURRENTLY SOLD OUT. --->

<!--- [MSX] – AZZURO 8-BIT JAM IS A PROMOTIONAL GAME FOR A REAL BAR IN BILBAO. --->



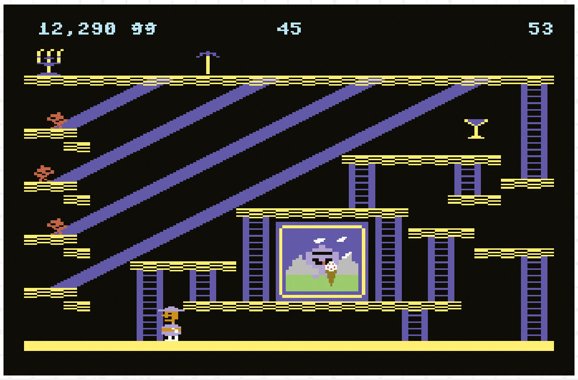
DATA BURST

MINER 2019'ER

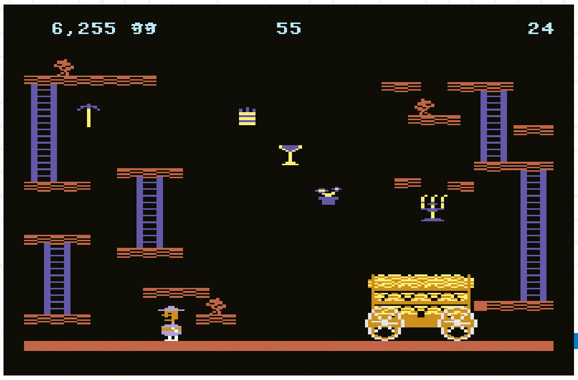
<INFO BY: PSYTRONIK (DANIEL AVERY, JASON PAGE, MIKE ROBERTSON, TREVOR STOREY) FORMAT: C64 – PAL & NTSC (ALSO WITH C64 MINI/THEC64) PRICE: $4.99 / PHYSICAL FROM £9.99-£39.99 VISIT: BIT.LY/MINER2019-DIGITAL AND BIT.LY/MINER2019-PHYSICAL />

<BODY> **In this *Miner 2049'er* prequel officially approved by Bill Hogue, Bounty Bob discovers a time machine in Big Five's basement.** Sent back to 2019, he must explore 25 levels to find a way back, stepping on every single platform to change its colour. Collision with the patrolling enemies is fatal; although collecting bonus items allows Bob to kill them on contact while they are vulnerable. There are two difficulty modes – Classic kills the player if they fall too far and resets the level status on death, whereas the gentler Casual setting means no reset and safer falls. New mechanics are gradually introduced, from lifts, slides and machinery to a haystack that breaks your fall. Bob can dig up uranium (glowing segments of a platform that appear briefly) and find hidden fuel rods to unlock an extra level; this game also includes three levels that were previously exclusive to ColecoVision's *Miner 2049'er*. After the excellent intro, loading screen and the title tune, the game looks and sounds remarkably close to the original but with clever added touches. And that is its biggest problem – the old-fashioned look and gameplay mechanics make it extremely challenging, relying on nostalgia to keep you interested. A well-made prequel to a platforming classic that is tough to get into. </BODY>

SCORE: **69%**

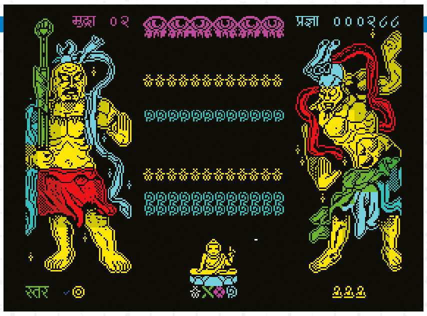


<!--- [C64] BOB AUTOMATICALLY SLIPS DOWN THE DIAGONAL SLIDES IF YOU STAND AT THE TOP OF THEM --->

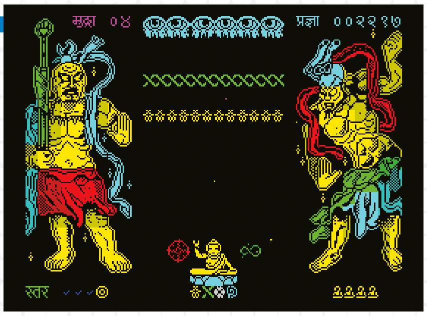


NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**



<!--- [ZX SPECTRUM] TIBETAN BUDDHISM INSPIRED THE LOOK AND STORY OF THIS UNUSUAL PUZZLE GAME. --->



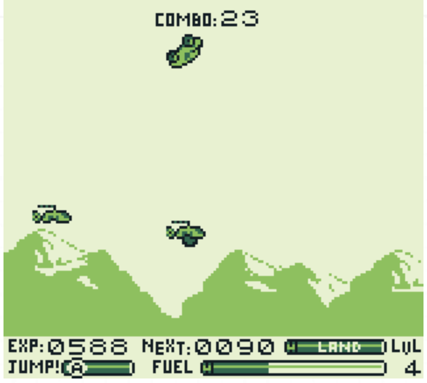
<!--- [ZX SPECTRUM] A SUCCESSFUL GESTURE ENDING IN FIRE/SPACE (THE YELLOW CIRCLE ICON) DESTROYS ANOTHER CHAIN). --->

DEVA

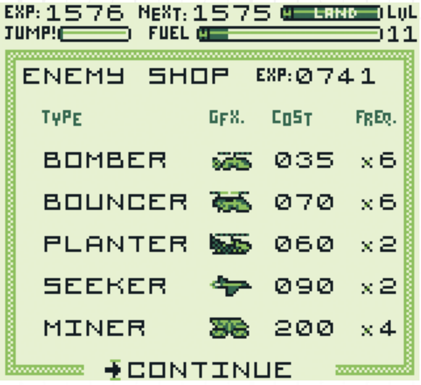
<INFO BY: FURILLO PRODUCTIONS FORMAT: ZX SPECTRUM
PRICE: NAME YOUR OWN PRICE DOWNLOAD
VISIT: FURILLOPRODUCTIONS.ITCH.IO/DEVA />

<BODY> **To liberate humanity you must break the chains of suffering, anger and despair.** Mudras (symbolic gestures) are made by following the pattern of commands shown bottom-left, breaking the falling chains before they reach the bottom of the screen. There are four coloured chains on each level, and one of each type must be broken to advance – with more complicated mudras needed. Later, the Heavenly Kings will grant extra magic commands – to destroy any chain, or to stop time. Well-made graphics, sound and an optional Sanskrit character mode enhance the atmosphere of a game that will admittedly take a few goes to understand fully. Once you have mastered the basics, there is an additional Hard mode download to really test your skill. </BODY>

SCORE: **75%**



<!--- [GAME BOY] WITH A 23-HIT COMBO AND FULL EXP BAR, THE INDESTRUCTOTANK CAN NOW LAND TO REFUEL. --->



ENEMY SHOP EXP:0741

TYPE	GFX.	COST	FREQ.
BOMBER		035	x6
BOUNCER		070	x6
PLANTER		060	x2
SEEKER		090	x2
MINER		200	x4

CONTINUE

<!--- [GAME BOY] SPENDING YOUR EXPERIENCE MAKES ENEMIES APPEAR MORE FREQUENTLY TO JUMP ON. --->

INDESTRUCTOTANK!

<INFO BY: ANTONY LAVELLE / INCUBE8 GAMES FORMAT: GAME BOY
PRICE: DIGITAL $4.99 / BOXED CARTRIDGE $34.99 VISIT: BIT.LY/INDESTRUCTOTANK />

<BODY> **In this remake of a popular Flash game, Dirk Danger defeats enemies by bouncing on them with his IndestructoTank.** Staying airborne and hitting multiple targets increases your combo and earns more experience. Hitting bullets and bombs also keeps you aloft, at the cost of fuel. When the experience bar is full, landing lets you refuel, level up and 'buy' more enemies. Options are limited to the choice of Contrast mode and two difficulties, but it all works rather well. As a result it's very easy to pick up for a few minutes of mayhem. </BODY>

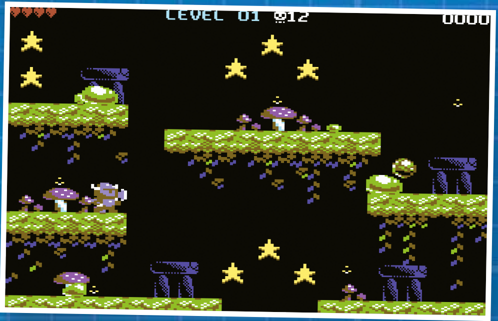
SCORE: **71%**

PROCESSING

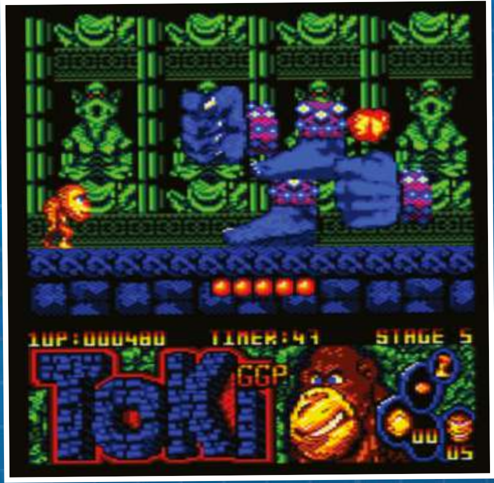
<INTRO> SPITTING APES, MUD AND SLIME ARE ON THE WAY </INTRO>

<BODY> **Amstrad owners are eagerly anticipating the *Toki* conversion from AmstradGGP.** (Trailers for this and *Mighty Street Fighter* are at amstradggp.com) "Some levels will now benefit from parallax scrolling and there's a big visual surprise for the brave who meet the final boss," says programmer Alain Plantvein. The game will be available on a physical 3-inch disk, and we will review it soon.

Over on the C64, Monte Boyd is close to finishing his promising racing game to be released through Protovision. "*Muddy Racers* is very close from a code perspective, pending final testing," he tells us. But Monte has also been sharing previews on Twitter (@monteboyd) of another project – *Knights & Slimes*, drawing on classic single-screen platform games such as *Bubble Bobble* and *Qwak*. With a choice of knight to control, you must collect stars and defeat enemies including skeletons and slimes (which break into smaller pieces as you hit them). Cute graphics and a world map are already in place, and this is shaping up to be a big hit. </BODY>



<!--- [C64] WE'LL BE SEEING STARS AND SPLITTING SLIME SOON. --->

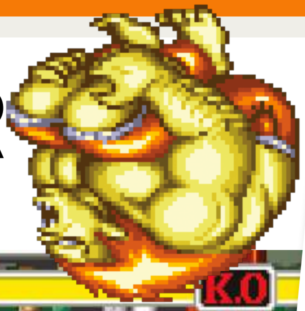


<!--- [AMSTRAD CPC] GIVE THE BOSS A BIG HAND, IT'S TOKI TIME. --->

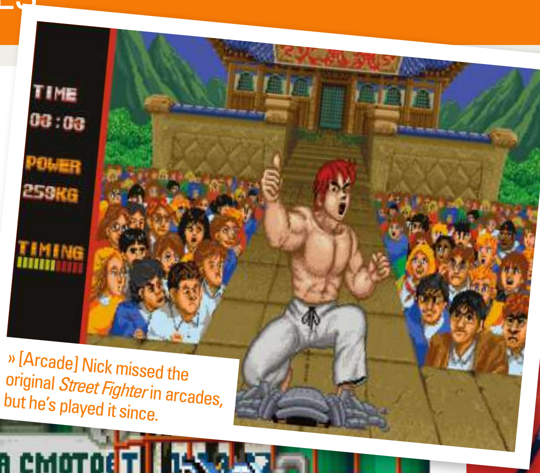
HOT TOPIC

RETROBATES MULL OVER THE SCENE'S MOST INTRIGUING ISSUES

STREET FIGHTER



The team look back at Capcom's acclaimed series



» [Arcade] Nick missed the original *Street Fighter* in arcades, but he's played it since.

DARRAN JONES

NICK THORPE

TIM EMPEY

The *Street Fighter* series has come a long way since its arcade debut in 1987. Nick, Tim and Darran chat about their favourite games and characters from the series.

DARRAN

So what's everyone's earliest *Street Fighter* memory?

TIM

At the back of the Craigavon Shopping Centre in Northern Ireland, there were usually two arcade machines – for a while one of them was *Street Fighter*. Not the thump-pad one though, this just had regular buttons.

NICK

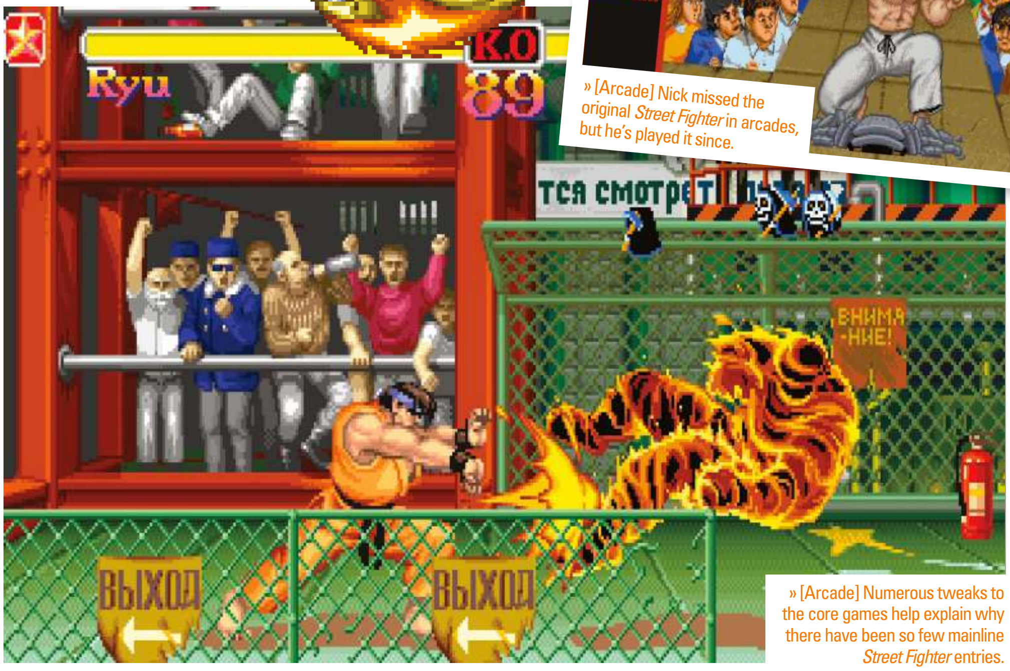
Playing *Street Fighter II Turbo* on the SNES at a family event of some kind, we were passing the pad around trying to get through the single-player game as Sagat.

DARRAN

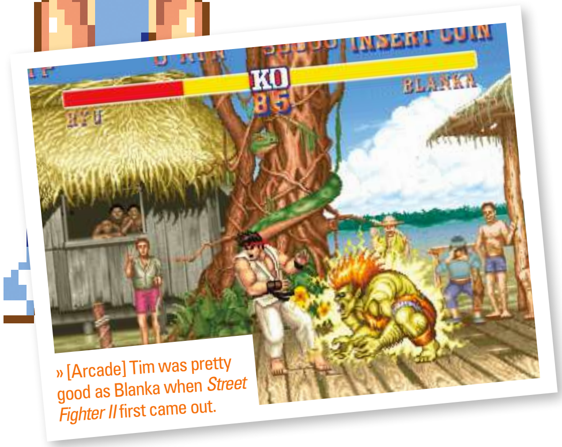
Like Tim, my first memory was of *Street Fighter*, although I saw it with the original pads on holiday at Barry Island. What did you think of the sequel from an aesthetic viewpoint? I loved it.

NICK

I didn't really appreciate the look of *Street Fighter II* properly as a kid. By the time I got to see it, *Mortal Kombat* was already out and the fighters looked like real people.



» [Arcade] Numerous tweaks to the core games help explain why there have been so few mainline *Street Fighter* entries.



» [Arcade] Tim was pretty good as Blanka when *Street Fighter II* first came out.

DARRAN

See, *Street Fighter II* for me felt so interesting. Granted you had variety in *Street Fighter*, but it felt so pronounced here. We all know Nick's answer, but what character did you like to play as in *Street Fighter II*?

NICK

Ryu, because he wore a white gi like I did at karate classes.

TIM

Blanka initially, I could stun people pretty quickly with him. However, when I got *Street Fighter II* on the Mega Drive I played with them all.

DARRAN

I used to play with Chun-Li and E-Honda, basically any character where you could spam one button in order to win. With regards to the Mega Drive version Tim, please say you had the awesome six-button pad.

TIM

Eventually, but for a time I had to hit Start in between Vega's wall dives. I was so glad when the six-button pad came out. The d-pad on it was great.

DARRAN

Wow, that sounds nearly as bad as playing it on an Amiga or Atari ST!

TIM

Oh I played it on the Amiga as well. With a joystick… and all the disk-swapping – a nightmare even with an external drive.

DARRAN

Lol. So did we all bounce off *Street Fighter III* because we were all idiots at the time?

NICK

Yup. I saw it at Sega World in the Trocadero and what I saw wasn't the great animation or a refined fighting model, it was the lack of all the characters I loved. I didn't get into it until I got it for the Dreamcast some time later.

DARRAN

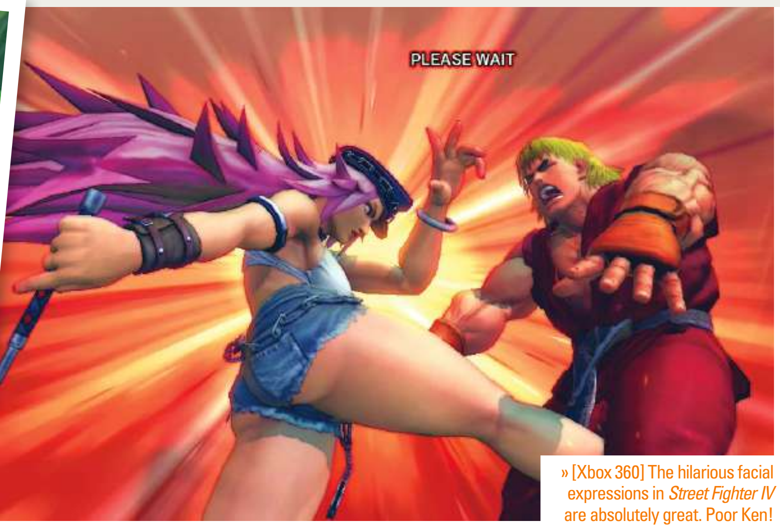
Again, I saw it in arcades originally and thought, "These characters look shit." I got really into it on *games™*, which I imagine is when Tim first discovered it.

TIM

Yeah, it was when *3rd Strike* came out on PS2 and Xbox and there was a massive resurgence of interest in it – especially in the *Cube*/*games™* office. Maybe it was because no one had played it and there hadn't been a good 2D fighter out in a while.

DARRAN

Man, we had some great times playing *3rd Strike* at work. We'll



» [Xbox 360] The hilarious facial expressions in *Street Fighter IV* are absolutely great. Poor Ken!

> “I didn't really appreciate the look of Street Fighter II properly as a kid”
>
> **NICK THORPE**

quickly jump back a bit to the *Alpha* games. Did everyone like the new art style?

NICK

I loved that, I was into anime from a relatively young age and that was the direction they were going for. It carried over to the crossovers too, and I had a lot of fun with *X-Men Vs Street Fighter* at the arcade.

TIM

I remember having one go on *X-Men Vs Street Fighter* in the Trocadero, but I didn't know what was going on and it's really rather frantic.

DARRAN

I find them a bit too hectic at times too, particularly when you're trying to do Air Juggles and similar things.

NICK

That was what appealed to me at the time, going crazy with jumps three screens tall and air fireballs and all sorts of nonsense. Did you guys get swept up in the *Street Fighter IV* hype? I remember going to an arcade trade show and having to shove my camera through a crowd because I couldn't get near enough to take a photo of the cabinet.

DARRAN

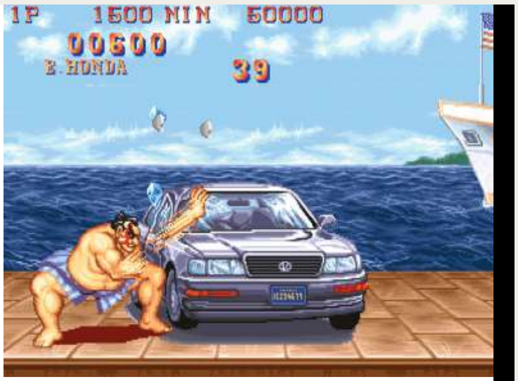
I can still remember the day Leo Tan from Capcom came in with two *Street Fighter IV* arcade cabinets. I think the thing I really took away from it was the facial expressions on the characters' faces whenever they got hit. They all had so much personality, even though I was never keen on their huge feet.

TIM

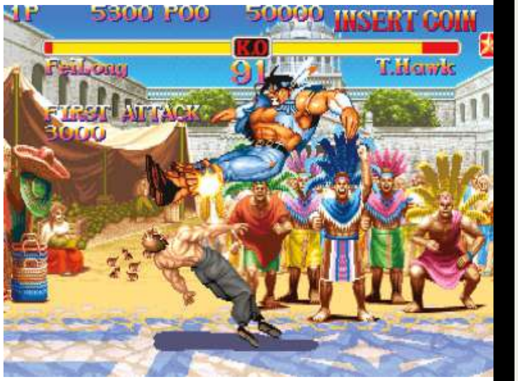
Yes! I was so flipping happy when it was announced. That day with the two cabinets in the office, well, I didn't get much work done that day aside from, ahem, research.

NICK

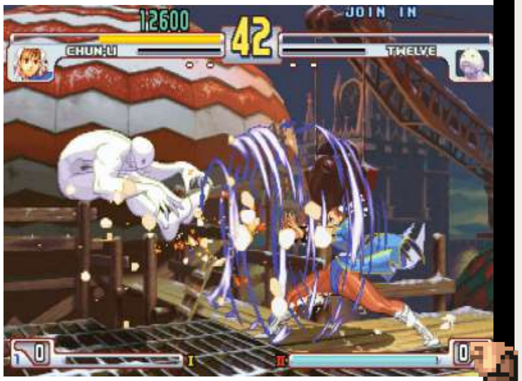
That's amazing. But how have we got through a whole *Street Fighter* piece without mentioning the Darran Jones Fa- [That's enough out of you! – Darran] *



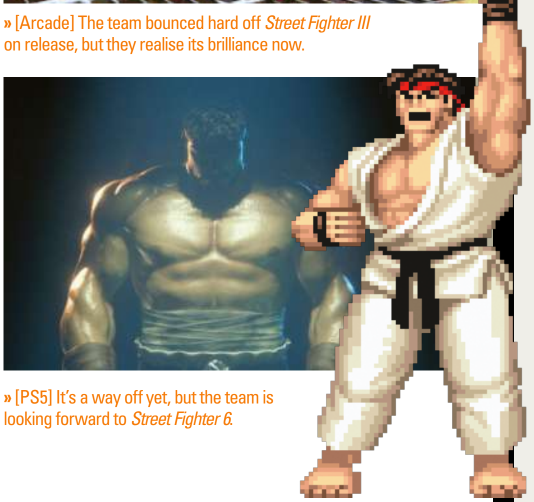
» [Arcade] Darran enjoys any character with a 'mash to win' attack.



» [Arcade] The series has always had great animation and *Super Street Fighter II: The New Challengers* is no exception.



» [Arcade] The team bounced hard off *Street Fighter III* on release, but they realise its brilliance now.



» [PS5] It's a way off yet, but the team is looking forward to *Street Fighter 6*.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS

Readers explain why Street Fighter remains so popular

Victoria Donovan

It's the epitome of 'easy to learn, hard to master' gameplay. Anyone can pick it up and play, and that gives it lasting appeal.

Daley Eve

Street Fighter is THE fighting game right? They have a winning formula that has stood the test of time. Slick combat and stylish characters, some of whom are as recognisable as Mario.

DungeonMaster Joe

Timeless character design and *Street Fighter II* is THE BEST sequel of all time if you compare all the things it does SO much better than *Street Fighter*.

Damon

The memorable and easy to recognise characters like Ryu, Ken, Chun Li, Guile and Blanka etc.

Chris Miles

Each character has a distinct personality, backed up by iconic soundtracks and great game mechanics.

GOLEM

Street Fighter II was the first one-on-one combat game that allowed people to fight each other and improve not only on their tactics but also their execution. It also planted the seeds for what we know as the FGC and esports in general.

Martin Gams

Because of the perfect gameplay… which is still the same and Chun-Li.

Musa Özil

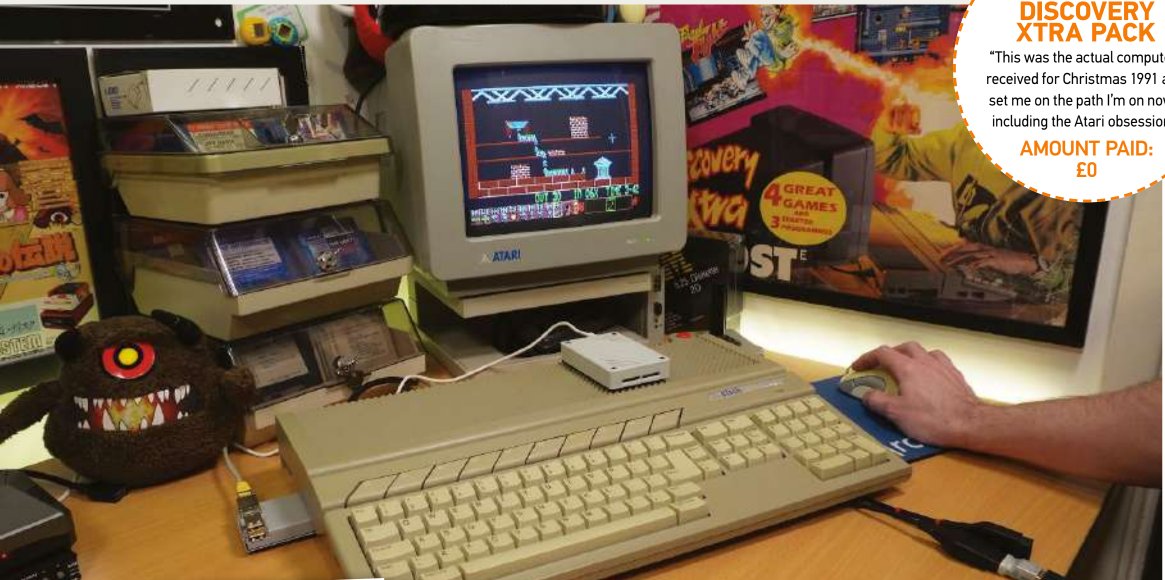
It was the first two-player game that truly created a competitive environment. The multiple styles of play, the generally open movement that other fighters before it like *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* and *Karate Champ* lacked, and the unique characters really gave this game an appeal that people are still trying to emulate. Even without the combos, this game would have created such a popularity that it would still be around today.

Erbkaiser

Great design from the start and constant iteration on what works well, instead of reinventing itself from the ground up.

Inept Saiyan

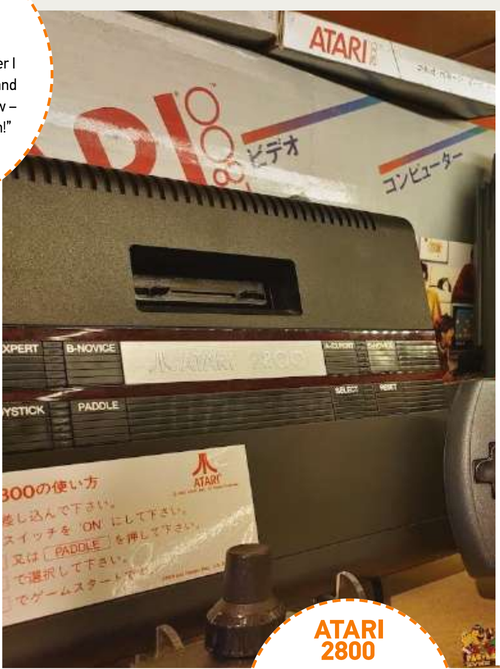
I think the simple answer is that the Hadoken is probably one of the coolest contributions to not just games, but civilisation in general.



ATARI STE DISCOVERY XTRA PACK

"This was the actual computer I received for Christmas 1991 and set me on the path I'm on now – including the Atari obsession!"

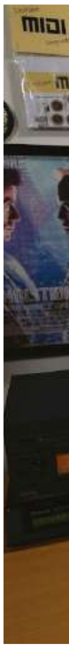
AMOUNT PAID: £0



ATARI 2800

"The incredibly rare Japanese version of the Atari 2600, complete in box."

AMOUNT PAID: £120



HOOKED ON ATARI

A YouTuber's foray into picking up historical consoles and games

BIO

NAME:
Rees Stephenson

LOCATION:
Midlands, UK

FAVOURITE GAME:
Doom (PC)

FAVOURITE SYSTEM:
The Atari 8-bits

COLLECTION WORTH:
Probably around £10K+

YOUTUBE:
youtube.com/c/ctrlaltrees

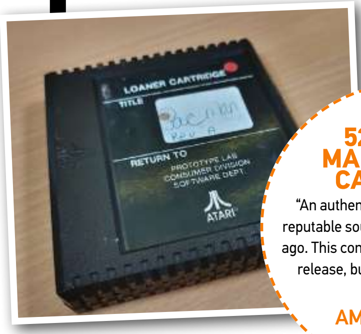
This month's collector is Youtuber Rees Stephenson, an Atari fan with a difference. "My first gaming experience was on an Atari 2600 Jr that my cousin got one Christmas," begins 38-year-old Rees from the Midlands. "I begged my parents for 'an Atari' after that, but they weren't keen on games consoles and wanted a computer that I could also use for homework." Not to worry; Rees was soon in possession of the Atari STE Discover Xtra pack. "Some of those pack games have stayed with me – *Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters*, *Final Fight* and *Sim City*. I also remember spending months exploring the original *Monkey Island*."

Narrowly missing out a special mention is Rees' collection of *ST Format* magazines. "My dad would regularly pick [it] up from the newsagents," he explains. "And through it I discovered games like *Revenge Of The Mutant Camels*, *Fire & Ice and Endurance*, which was a full-blown first-person virtual reality game. The irreverent writing style also shaped my sense of humour for years to come." Rees' complete collection of *ST Format* mags, complete with cover disks, in binders *and* safely ensconced in binders is truly an enviable sight.

Also approaching completion is Rees' set of Atari Jaguar games. "*ST Format* hyped [the Jaguar] up when I was a kid, and I thought it was the best thing ever," he remembers. "Of course, as with Atari at the time, a lack of funding and poor developer relations led to its downfall – but it does have some nice exclusives as well as some very strong ports."

Strangely, despite all this Atari love, Rees' favourite game of all time is renowned chiefly on another platform. "My dad used to bring his full desktop Amstrad 286 home at weekends to work on his sales reports. I was blown away by *Wolfenstein 3D* and when we eventually got a 486, it came with the shareware episode of *Doom*." Like many a young gamer in the Nineties, Rees was hypnotised by id's classic FPS. "There's just something about it – the tightly-focused gameplay, the sounds, music, level and enemy designs. It's the complete package and I can't fault it." As you can see, Rees has a number of rare and lovingly cared-for items in his collection. Having begun a YouTube channel in 2019, initially documenting hardware repairs and upgrades, today it features game reviews and tours of his impressive collection. "It's grown quickly with over 7,000 subscribers," he says very proudly.

But whatever is on show on his channel, it'll always be Atari for this retro fan. "Atari is one of those iconic brands, and it arguably invented gaming as an industry," he smiles. "I find the whole history of the company, from its meteoric rise to its downfall in the mid-Nineties to be absolutely fascinating." Whatever your opinion of the famous company, one thing is for sure: it's been a roller-coaster ride for Atari fans. *

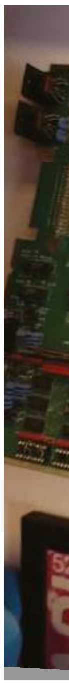


ATARI 5200 PAC-MAN LOANER CARTRIDGE

"An authentic loaner bought from a reputable source in California ten years ago. This contains the final commercial release, but it's still a special piece of history."

AMOUNT PAID: £110

CTRL
ALT
REES



Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

ACORN ARCHIMEDES A305

"This was the original ARM machine, the CPU that's now in pretty much every pocket around the world."

AMOUNT PAID: £280

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

ATARI 'SPARROW' PROTOTYPE MOTHERBOARD

■ "This was the prototype that eventually became the Atari Falcon030, a very rare machine in its own right. My revision A board is one of only five known to have survived."

PAID: £200

BARGAIN HUNT

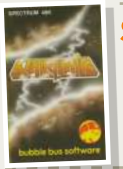
Your guide to the rising world of retro prices

THE COVER STAR

STREET FIGHTER II

The *Street Fighter II* SNES cart is a good start, often selling for as little as **£10.** Inevitably, a boxed copy will set you back more, but generally the plentiful supply of this popular beat-'em-up ensures prices remain under **£45.**

STARQUAKE



Originally issued in a single jewel cassette box, the Spectrum version of this brilliant Steve Crow game rarely sells for more than a fiver. After BLOB on another format? Atari ST and MSX ports of *Starquake* are gonna cost you significantly more, upward of **£30.**

KLAX

This brilliant Lynx arcade conversion is as playable today as it was 30 years ago. A loose cart on its lonesome can be snared for around a tenner, while even a boxed copy is unlikely to set you back more than **£20** if you're patient.

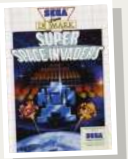
AMSTRAD GX4000

A fresh supply of new boxed GX4000 consoles appeared a few years ago and could be secured for as little as **£50.** No such luck today with most going for **£90-£200,** and in either case, the high prices of its games also makes collecting for this Amstrad flop an expensive endeavour.

KLONOA: DOOR TO PHANTOMILE

Like many PlayStation games, *Klonoa*'s value has soared in the last few years. While not exactly rare, expect to shell out at least **£150** for a mint copy of this dreamy platformer.

SUPER SPACE INVADERS



The Master System game is a cheap date, regularly selling for under a tenner. Most other versions are even less, although that bizarre breed, *The Hit Squad* collectors, are still ensuring that particular re-release goes for as much as **£100** on the Spectrum.

ELITE

The famous space-trading game initially retailed in a large cardboard box on the BBC Micro. Complete copies are slowly becoming harder to find and are likely to cost **£40** or more. The Firebird Spectrum and Commodore 64 ports are cheaper, selling for between **£10** and **£20,** depending on condition.

HOW MUCH?!

MEGA MAN V

We know *Mega Man* games can be expensive, but even we were surprised by this one. Fourteen bidders were after a complete copy of *Mega Man 5* on Game Boy, but only one could win it. The final price? A staggering **£1,669.44.** Yikes!

Prices correct at time of print

MY RETRO LIFE

PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT OUR **SHARED PASSION**

PUZZLE PARADISE

Nick is the man who arranges the blocks. But why?

My love for puzzle games is itself a puzzle, and one with a missing piece at that. As far as I can remember, I have always liked them. I can't pinpoint a slick marketing campaign like the one that hooked me on *Sonic*, or a childhood activity like the karate classes that led me to fighting games. I just know that if a game has blocks to be dropped, tiles to be rearranged or colours to be matched, I'll take a keen interest in it. If there's an origin story to be told, I have forgotten it.

I can't remember the first puzzle game I played, but that's not to say that there's no history to be told. I can remember playing *Tetris* on a relative's Game Boy for just a tad too long as a child. Later on at a family friend's barbecue, I had a 45-minute game of *Devil Dice* that fascinated the owner of the game and infuriated the many other kids waiting for a go on the PlayStation. A trip to cover an arcade trade show nearly went awry when I found myself terribly distracted by a *Bejeweled* cabinet, of all things. One of the last times I ever played games with my younger sister, before her arthritis became too bad, was an epic doubles game of the fabulous *Columns*.

Honestly though, I think that my love of puzzle games says more about my innate personality than my past. My mum tells me that as a young child, I used to enjoy taking my toy cars and lining them up, which indicates a desire to create order. I recently touched on how the mechanics of *Tetris* satisfy this need better than other puzzle games, to the point that it's quite soothing to play. I also had a set of toy gears, which I found fascinating because it was possible to use one gear to make all of them move, and apparently frequently turned my toys upside down to see how they worked. In much the same way, I love setting up combos and chain reactions in puzzle games, or figuring out how pre-set ones work.

Above all else, puzzle games reveal my inner competitor. Back when the Switch was a brand-new console, *Puyo Puyo Tetris* had just come into the **Retro Gamer** office and had surprisingly taken hold as a multiplayer favourite over *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe*. Having a good understanding of both games and a penchant for putting together devastating attacks, I soon became the man to beat. After one too many crushing swap combos, and an incident in which I caused a colleague to swear creatively and profusely in front of her boss, "try to beat Nick" morphed into "let's play something else". That might sound like I was just bullying inexperienced players, but at that point I was ranked as one of the UK's top 20 players in the game's online mode.

> "I can remember playing Tetris on a relative's Game Boy for just a tad too long as a child"
>
> NICK THORPE

Ever since then, there have been moments in Darran's shed where I've been allowed to run wild on the likes of *Magical Tetris Challenge* and *Baku Baku*, but the rule "don't play puzzle games with Nick" has meant that I've had to look elsewhere for competition. *Tetris 99* became an obsession for a good while, and I've even managed to claim the top spot in the Invictus mode that is only available to winners of the regular mode. Ideally though, I want the thrill of an opponent in the same room as me.

A few years ago, we had visitors come along to the office to demonstrate a new plug & play console. It was a casual meeting until one of our guests suggested that we play a competitive puzzle game. He'd been playing it for hundreds of hours to test the machine, and was pretty confident in his skills. Our erstwhile production editor Drew ceded the controls to me, keen to see what might happen. I was later told that when the first big attack came in, the look on my face was of a man that was surprised to be bleeding his own blood, but I couldn't have been happier. A photo was taken right at the end of the match, and the defeated player's face was a picture. Who won? Well, I'll leave that to your imagination. *

OBSCURE SOLUTIONS

Some interesting puzzle games you may have overlooked

HANAGUMI TAISEN COLUMNS
This Saturn *Sakura Wars* tie-in has the best competitive mode of any version of *Columns*, with the possibility of big attacks and huge comebacks.

DETONATOR
Set explosive charges to blow up buildings. It's not much to look at, but it's challenging and a really cheap addition to any PS2 library.

LANDMAKER
Match colours to build up structures before eliminating them. The PAL PlayStation conversion of this Taito arcade game is very cheap.

HEXIC HD
If you ignored this Xbox 360 freebie, take another look – it's backwards compatible and I've sunk countless hours into it over the years.

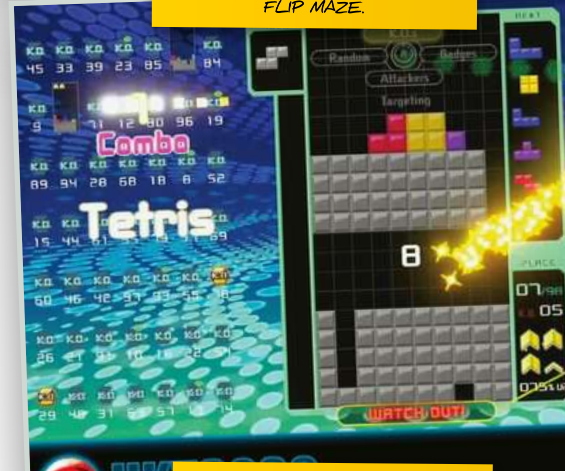
CROSSNIQ+
This modern sliding tile puzzler for Switch and PC has a delightful retro look that harks back to the turn of the millennium.

BLOCKS TO GO
CREDITS 0
SCORE 53030
HI-SCORE 100
WAVE 02
WAVE 02
2x 10000

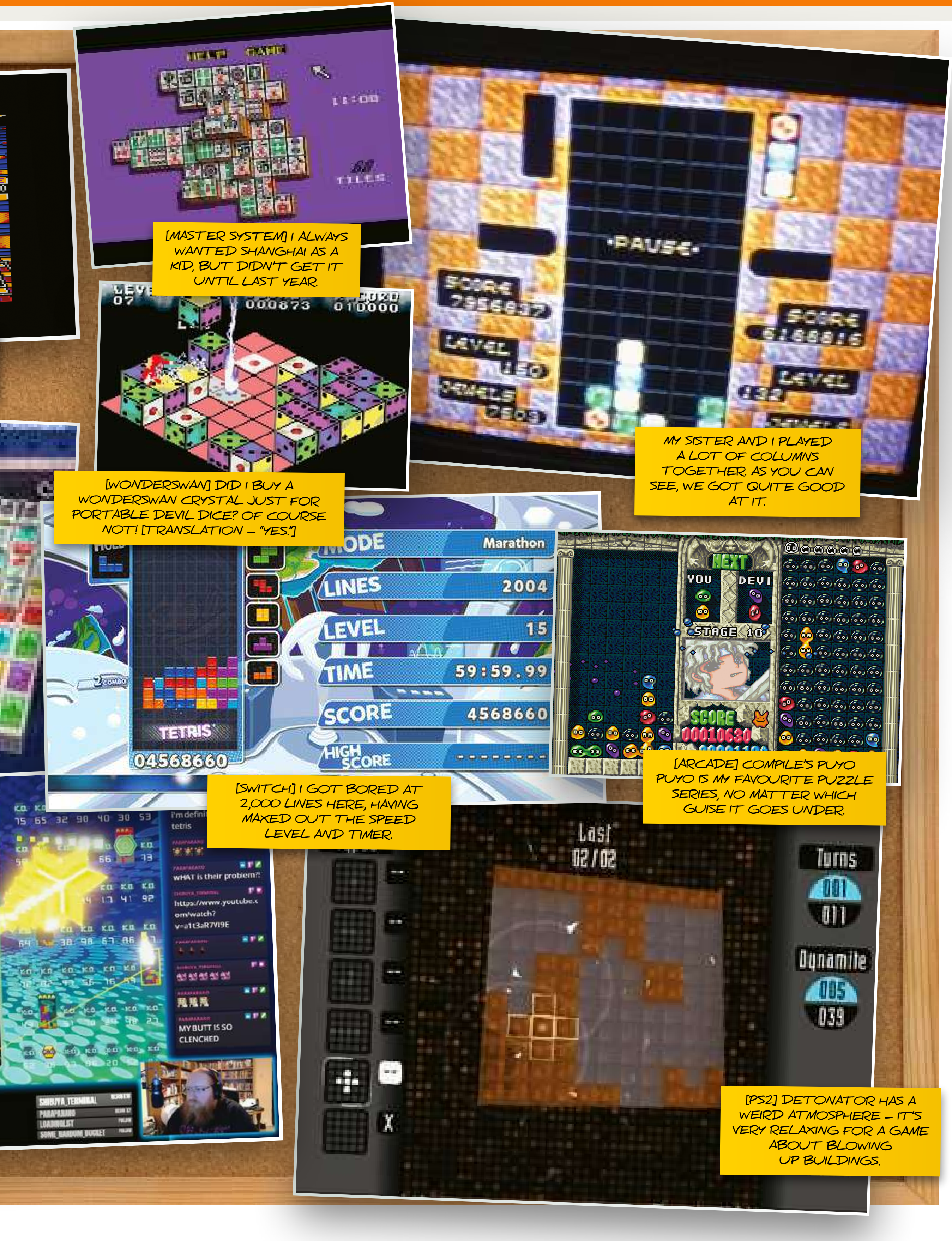
[AMSTRAD GX4000] I HAVE TO STOP MYSELF BUYING REDUNDANT COPIES OF GAMES LIKE KLAX ACROSS MULTIPLE FORMATS.

31000
INSERT
GOOD!

[ARCADE] I LOVE DOING DEEP DIVES TO FIND LESSER-KNOWN PUZZLE GAMES LIKE FLIP MAZE.



LOOKING AT THIS TETRIS 99 STREAM, I CLEARLY BECOME A BIT INTENSE DURING MULTIPLAYER COMPETITION.


HELP GAME
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SCORE 7956837
LEVEL 150
JEWELS 2808
SCORE 61888:6
LEVEL 132
MODE Marathon
LINES 2004
LEVEL 15
TIME 59:59.99
SCORE 4568660
HIGH SCORE --------
TETRIS
04568660
NEXT
YOU
DEVI
STAGE 10
SCORE 00010630
Last 02/02
Turns 001 011
Dynamite 005 039

[MASTER SYSTEM] I ALWAYS WANTED SHANGHAI AS A KID, BUT DIDN'T GET IT UNTIL LAST YEAR.

MY SISTER AND I PLAYED A LOT OF COLUMNS TOGETHER. AS YOU CAN SEE, WE GOT QUITE GOOD AT IT.

[WONDERSWAN] DID I BUY A WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL JUST FOR PORTABLE DEVIL DICE? OF COURSE NOT! [TRANSLATION – "YES."]

[SWITCH] I GOT BORED AT 2,000 LINES HERE, HAVING MAXED OUT THE SPEED LEVEL AND TIMER.

[ARCADE] COMPILE'S PUYO PUYO IS MY FAVOURITE PUZZLE SERIES, NO MATTER WHICH GUISE IT GOES UNDER.

[PS2] DETONATOR HAS A WEIRD ATMOSPHERE – IT'S VERY RELAXING FOR A GAME ABOUT BLOWING UP BUILDINGS.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE PUZZLE GAMES

If four readers share the same answer, they all disappear

John Paul Sutherland
I have sunk a ton of time recently into the *Picross* games on Game Boy and Super Famicom. All of them are excellent, and in terms of the latter, a great reason to dust off the Super NES mouse!

Ana Lu
Bishoujo Senshi Sailor Moon S: Kurukkurin – I know it has similar mechanics to other 'fight through puzzles' games, but it is a *Sailor Moon* game. So it's a win-win.

Tom @ The Pixel Empire
Pipe Mania. Its clever play mechanics were both cerebral and exciting, as you tried to plot a route to stay ahead of the water flow. It also had a fun co-op feature, which was (and still is) quite novel for a puzzler.

Paul Matthias
Kurushi holds a special place in my heart. I have never played another game like it even now, and it is presented in such a unique and frankly intimidating manner. Pure joy from start to finish.

Thom
I know *Tetris* is the obvious answer, but more people really need to check out the Japanese exclusive Super Famicom titles by BPS. *Super Tetris 2 + BomBliss* being a particular highlight. During lockdown I set up a SNES in the garden so I could have a game with my sister.

Steve Hardy
Feeling ancient now as I remember buying *Kwirk* on the Game Boy, so I'll pick that one! Any chance of a re-release?

GaryD
Boulder Dash. Yes, there was an arcade version, but it's, first and foremost, a puzzler. Simple design and mechanics belie an incredibly playable and addictive game.

Juan Jose Segura
Meteos, for the Nintendo DS must be up there among the best, for me.

MAILBAG

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WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a spanking copy of either our NES/Master System or SNES/Mega Drive books

OLD!
THE NES BOOK

STAR LETTER

KICKING THE HABIT

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I hate you. There, I finally said it, whoo that's a lot off my chest! So let me explain. I recently took stock of all my **Retro Gamer** magazines and realised I could have saved up all this money and would now own a Neo Geo with some decent games, but no, I decided to just read about the awesome games instead. What a plonker! I realised that with all the spare time I spent reading your magazines I could have been playing on one of my many consoles, but no, I continue to read your magazine like a crack addict and I can't stop. Please help me by giving me a free annual subscription so I can at least save the money!
Regards,
Alan Jenkins

We're glad you enjoy the magazine Alan, but don't forget to pursue other things you enjoy as well. We can't offer you a free subscription, but we will send you a book. Enjoy.

138870
ARMS BOMB
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89
ARMS BOMB
∞ 10
70211
1UP=4
2UP=3
DANGER
LEVEL-4
CREDITS 27

» [Neo Geo] Sure you could trade all your **Retro Gamer** issues for a Neo Geo, but you still couldn't afford *Metal Slug*.

SELECT
START
X
Y
A
B
TIME 319
16
82
ANBERNIC

» Systems like the Anbernic RG353P are becoming very popular. We'll look at covering them soon.

4
MULTIPLIER
SCORE
FUEL
HINT: CATCH SPECIAL WEAPON
204
SPEED
SCORE
0000660

» [Lynx] It's easy to love the Lynx when games like *RoadBlasters* exist on it.

PORTABLE DELIGHTS

Hi there **Retro Gamer**,
Since lockdown I've gotten really into emulation handhelds, not just for being able to revisit a vast amount of games from my childhood without having to hook up the original machines, but just for the joy of tinkering with them and getting them set up. The popularity of these machines seems to have increased greatly in that time too, with some incredible machines from AYN with the Odin, and the line of Anbernic machines. While they can never compare to the feeling of using real hardware, I for one would not sell my Amiga 1200 just because I can play the games on a handheld, do you feel they are something you could feature in the magazine?
Thanks,
Jason

Lockdown was a difficult time for everyone Jason and we're glad you found something to keep you occupied. It's an aspect of retro gaming that we've not really delved into before, but if we can get hold of some units we'll certainly consider coverage going forward.

HANDHELD HEAVEN

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I'm a huge fan of handheld gaming and believe it rarely gets the love it deserves. Generally, handhelds seem to get ignored by the gaming press and I've never really understood why. They often remind me of home computers in so much that they're normally very limited from a technical standpoint so developers need to be extremely creative. Many of the games are also highly addictive because gameplay becomes far more important than visuals, so that becomes the focus.

Anyway, I love handheld gaming in all its forms and it would be fantastic if you could maybe run a history piece on the many different handhelds that exist and the technological hurdles that each system faced. PS, my favourite handheld is the Lynx. It's very underrated.
Regards,
Simon Holmes

Thanks for writing in, Simon. Both Nick and Darran have a fair few handhelds between them so we're sure we can put something together in the near future. Darran's a big fan of the Lynx as well, so you're in very fine company.

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

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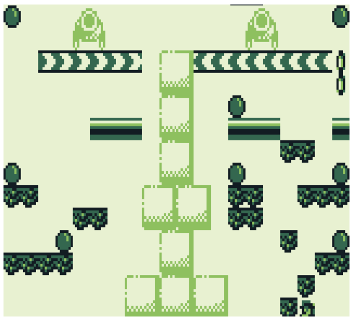

» [Game Boy] Fans of *Chuckie Egg* will enjoy *Bill & Ted's Excellent Game Boy Adventure.*

YOU'RE THE TOPS

Hi **Retro Gamer**,
I'm a big fan of your Top Ten series! I was wondering if there was any consideration for an article regarding the best DMG Game Boy games of all time?
Thanks very much,
Spencer

Do you mean our online lists, Spencer? They're originally from the mag and we did a Game Boy list in issue 63. We won't reveal all the games, but they did include *Bill & Ted's Excellent Game Boy Adventure, R-Type* and *Kirby's Pinball Land.*

THE BEST ADVICE

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I am a regular subscriber and just wanted to say thank you for all the great advice you give when I'm deciding what's best to buy. I recently bought my own Arcade 1-Up *Street Fighter II* cabinet and it's amazing. Darran would love it, as it has *Strider*. Please continue to give your best advice as it really helps when buying and selling retro items.
Many thanks,
Kelvin Courtenay

We're glad you're enjoying the magazine Kelvin and we're glad you're enjoying your new 1-Up cabinet (Darran wants the *Out Run* version). As long as companies keep sending us hardware to review, we'll keep offering the advice you enjoy.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Inside Number 10

We don't normally discuss politics in the mag, but we found the farcical shenanigans of Boris Johnson's drawn-out departure more entertaining than the latest season of *Stranger Things*. We've still no idea who is going to take over but the whole circus has been better than a Christmas pantomime.

» [Arcade] 1-Up's arcade series is very popular. Kelvin loves his new cabinet.

Your say

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What is your favourite Street Fighter game?

Chris Jowett
Street Fighter II as me and my mate used to park our work's vans round the back of the local truck stop out of sight and spend the whole afternoon playing it most days when we should have been working!

MK
Street Fighter Alpha 2 and *3* are my favourites. I really like the speed when compared to standard *Street Fighter* games.

Shining Galoot
I really like the *Alpha* games. I'm completely casual but everything about them just pops. They're fast and bright and the music is great.

SAF
3rd Strike because the gameplay was smooth, the sprites were perfect and the music was amazing.

Martin
Street Fighter Zero 1 on PS1. A combination of the awesome graphics, fantastic remixes, Redbook audio and the Chain Combo system. Love it! Great Japanese box art too.

Steven Hall
Super Street Fighter II: The New Challengers! I loved the new characters, especially Fei Long!

Danielle Nelson
Street Fighter Alpha 3. I have very fond memories playing people on all levels of the game, plus practising and performing combos with V-Karin was a great feeling.

Luke Hoak
Street Fighter II on the Super Nintendo was just one of those games that seemed like you broke into the arcade and had 500 quarters to spend. It was a giant step up from 8-bit fighters.

Julie
I have a huge soft spot for *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*. I'm terrible at it but the phenomenal sprite work coupled with its fast pace gameplay was unlike anything else I had played barring maybe *Marvel Vs Capcom*.

Benjamin Joseph
My favourite *Street Fighter* is currently *IV* because it reimagined the classic game and built off the best features of the previous titles.

N4m4ste
Super Street Fighter II on SNES, there's no challenge.

O'Neal
Street Fighter II Turbo blew my mind as a kid and got me into fighting games. Still playing all the *Street Fighters* today!

Ben Wilson
Street Fighter Alpha 3, easily. The numerous diverse fighting styles, the different combo styles, it was almost like multiple different fighting games rolled into one.

skyé?
I think *Ultra Street Fighter II* from the Switch is beautiful with its completely new graphics and tight gameplay.

retro GAMER

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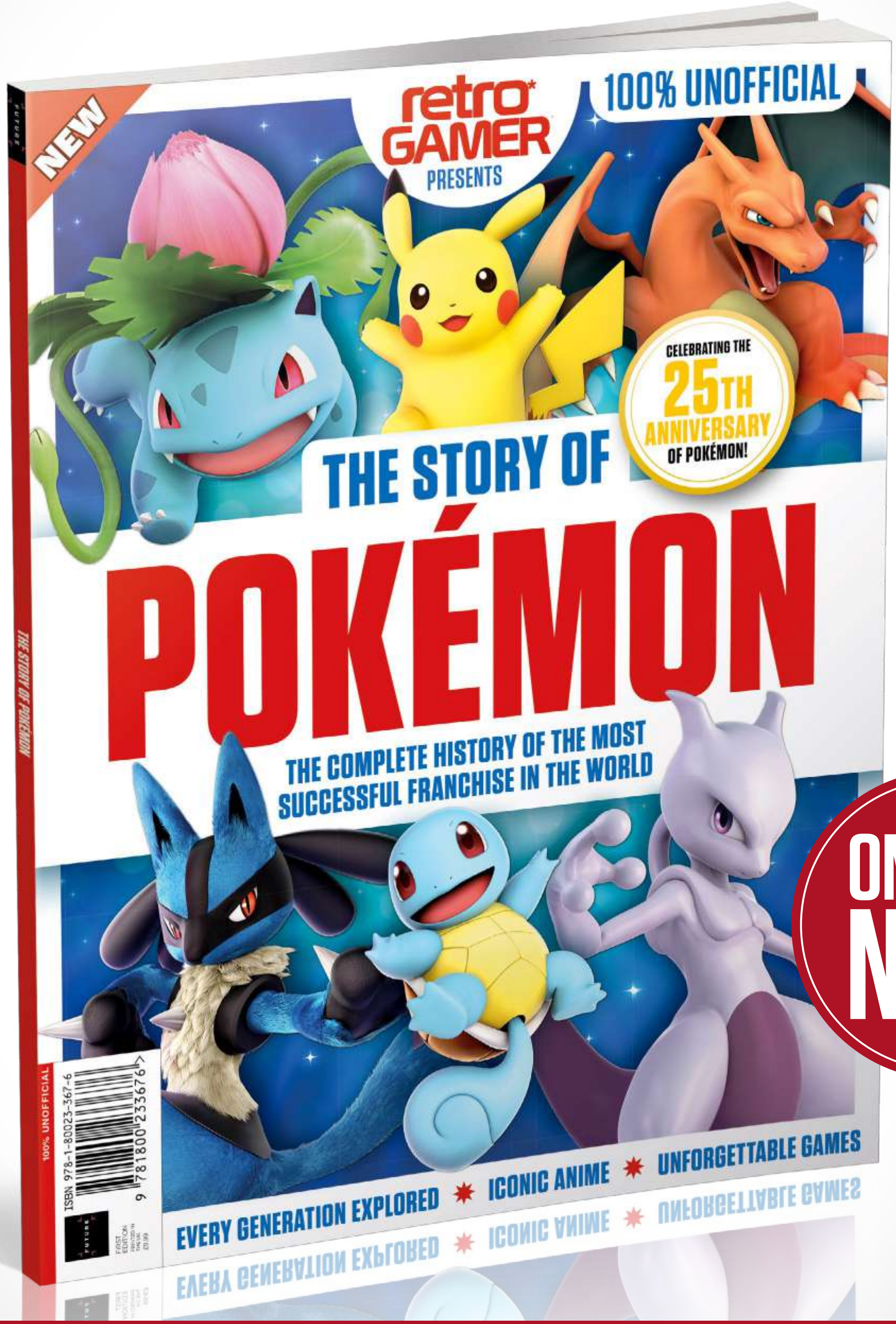
Widely Recycled

A WORLD OF DREAMS AND ADVENTURES WITH POKÉMON AWAITS. LET'S GO!

Embark on a journey from the very first generation of Pokémon, all the way to the eighth. On the way, you'll delve deep into the stories behind the videogames, television series and more. Get ready to catch 'em all!



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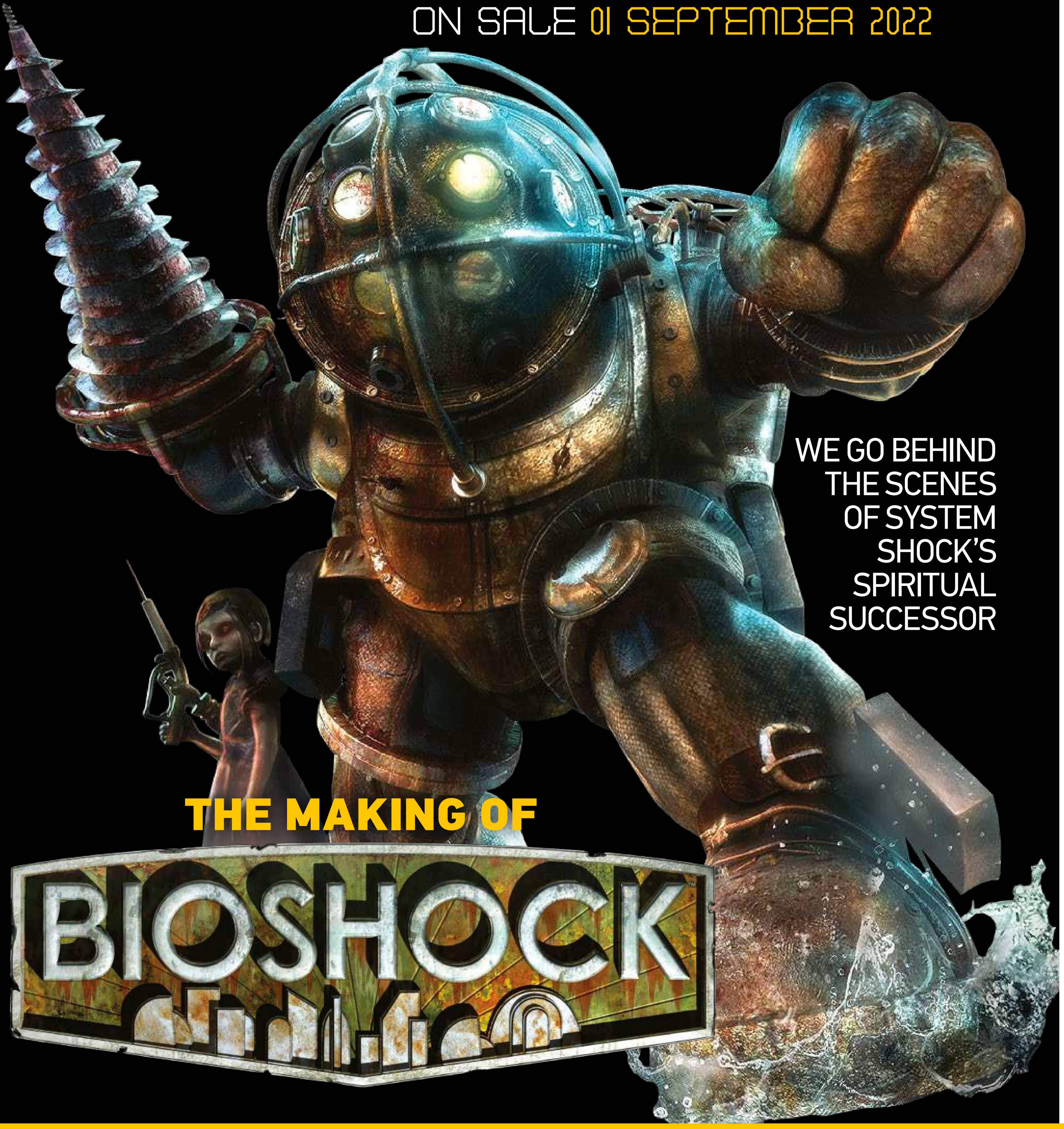

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678

Donkey Kong Jungle Beat

UM, BONGOS?

RETROREVIVAL

» GAMECUBE » 2004 » NINTENDO EAD TOKYO

During my final year of university, I was fortunate to live in a house with five other gamers. That meant plenty of great nights playing games like *Wii Sports*, *Dead Or Alive 4*, *Rock Band*, *Power Stone 2* and *Mario Kart Wii*. It also meant the occasional conflict of taste came up. Mat could never understand why I'd pump coins into *Sega Rally 3* at the Students' Union bar when we had *Gran Turismo 4* at home, and Helen thought my love of "weird old games with terrible graphics" was questionable. When I brought *Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat* into the house, it looked like we were headed for another clash, as Mat declared it to be the stupidest thing he'd ever seen.

To be fair, a platform game that uses the *Donkey Konga* bongo peripheral is an unusual concept, but if you've already experienced it you'll know that it's a true gem within the GameCube library. You'd expect the unusual input method to detract from the game, but the controls are actually so responsive that the game includes a combo counter that rewards fluid play. Beside that, the extra physicality involved in playing the game fits the burly Donkey Kong perfectly, especially during boss battles when you pound the drums to bash the baddies.

Fortunately I didn't have to try very hard to convince Mat of its virtues. I simply left the bongo controller set up while Helen and I went to campus and let his curiosity get the better of him. When we returned, we walked into the living room to find him sitting cross legged on the floor, transfixed by a game that he'd dismissed just hours earlier. So if you've previously considered *Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat* a little too weird, I'd urge you to give it a go. It's not a long game, but it's a unique one that will keep you entertained from start to finish. *

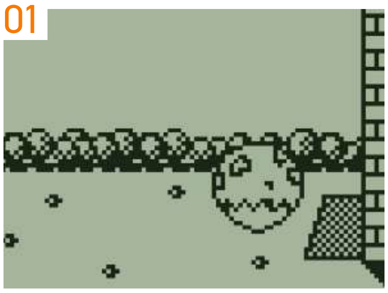
ENDGAME

TOGEPI'S GREAT ADVENTURE

Pokémon mini
ポケモンミニ
専用カートリッジ
The Pokémon Company
トゲピーのだいぼうけん
1人用アクションゲーム

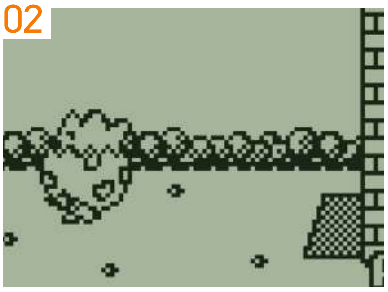
» When it comes to adventure, the first day of a new job often feels like a pretty big one. You're embarking on a change to your daily routine – going to a different place and interacting with different people. So what happens when a videogame character leaves one major series for another? Let's skip to the end of this *Pokémon Mini* game and find out.

01



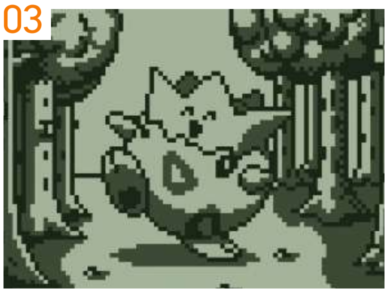
» Togepi was very excited about his new job. "This is the roll I've been dreaming of," he punned as he tumbled out of the house. His new series wasn't as popular as *Pokémon*, but it had heritage and he'd be a leading star.

02



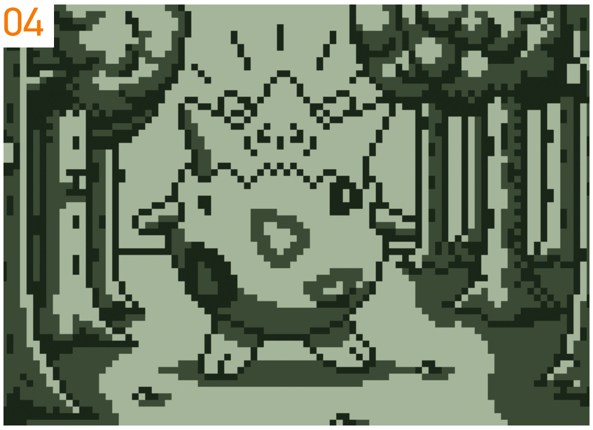
» There were plenty of naysayers, of course. "Eggs don't get respect in this business, buddy," said Squirtle. "When was Dizzy's last big release?" Pikachu just warned him that he was too cute for the part he'd be playing.

03



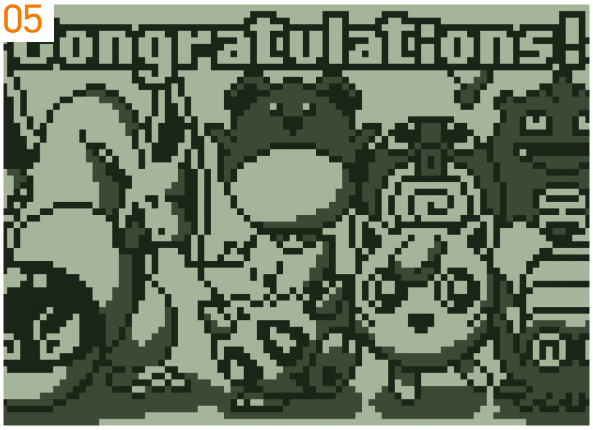
» Togepi wasn't convinced. Standing out from a huge crowd might be easy for an iconic first-generation starter Pokémon, but he wasn't one. So he decided to embrace villainy, just like Jim Carrey in *The Cable Guy*.

04



» Suddenly, Togepi got a phone call. "Look mate, we really don't want to lose you," said the talent relations manager at Game Freak. "We've got a big part for you in the anime, and a raise to go with it. What do you reckon?" Togepi accepted the offer.

05



» Togepi called the other company and told them the deal was off. "We've registered all these trademarks for this new villain," said the man at Sega. "What do we do now? Maybe... rebrand the old one?" And so, Dr Robotnik became Eggman.

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